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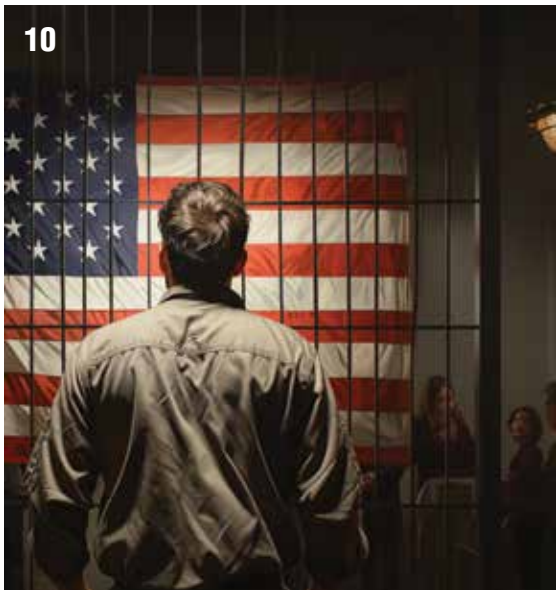

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What Will It Take for You to Get Involved?

This magazine, its predecessor publications, and its parent organization The John Birch Society have been warning for generations that the blessings of liberty that we've enjoyed as Americans are increasingly endangered by the growth of government beyond its constitutional restraints and the corresponding erosion of responsibility.

America's drift away from fundamental principles of good governance, we've further warned, has been by design and is not inevitable. Bad policies have caused America to go off course, and those policies can be changed.

At the founding meeting of the JBS in 1958, founder Robert Welch warned of the direction the policymakers of his time were taking us:

• "Greatly expanded government spending, for missiles, for so-called defense generally, for foreign aid, for every conceivable means of getting rid of ever larger sums of American money — as wastefully as possible."

• "Higher and then much higher taxes."

• "An increasingly unbalanced budget, despite the higher taxes."

• "Wild inflation of our currency, leading rapidly towards its ultimate repudiation."

• "Government controls of prices, wages, and materials, supposedly to combat inflation."

• "Greatly increased socialistic controls over every operation of our economy and every activity of our daily lives."

• "Far more centralization of power in Washington, and the practical elimination of our state lines."

• "The steady advance of federal aid to and control over our educational system, leading to complete federalization of our public education."

Welch also warned about other plans to take America off course, including "the gradual surrender of American sovereignty, piece by piece and step by step, to various international organizations — of which the United Nations is the outstanding but far from the only example."

Those warnings were issued more than six decades ago, and they have, unfortunately, held up well against the test of time. Yet even though many have detected the ominous signposts to tyranny as America has increasingly gone off course, many others have dismissed the continuing warnings of The John Birch Society and its publications, including *The New American*, as alarmist or conspiracy theory.

But since 2020, there has been a seismic shift in the understanding of the American people that something is seriously wrong. In 2020, government authorities used the Covid pandemic to require Americans to wear masks, to compel them to take experimental vaccines, and to prohibit them from going to church or to work. The same year also witnessed widespread rioting that the Left justified as a natural response to our supposedly racist system in the wake of the death of George Floyd.

The pandemic was also used as a rationale for the unprecedented ramp-up of mail-in voting and the use of drop boxes that contributed to the large-scale voting irregularities that marred the 2020 presidential election.

Then there was January 6, 2021, and the arrest and imprisonment of hundreds of J6ers who went to Washington to protest the flawed election results. The fact that J6ers are being treated differently than left-wing rioters has not been lost on the American people.

In this issue, our cover story sheds much-needed light on the ordeal of the J6ers by telling the story of one prisoner, Kelly Meggs. Also, a companion piece reports on Louisiana Republican Congressman Clay Higgins' conclusion, based on his investigation of the evidence, that hundreds of FBI assets were implanted among the J6ers to lead them astray.

The ordeal of the J6ers is another powerful wake-up call that our freedoms are receding. Yet, while this awakening is leading many to become involved in the freedom movement, others are fearful to speak out because of the prospect of government retribution. For those who may fall in the latter camp, please consider a warning attributed to Hiram Mann: "No man escapes when freedom fails, the best men rot in filthy jails. And those who cry 'appease, appease' are hanged by those they tried to please."

— *Gary Benoit*

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Chinese Billionaire One of Top 100 U.S. Landowners

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The Land Report magazine noted in an online article on January 8 that Tianqiao Chen, a Chinese billionaire and member of the Chinese Communist Party, has joined the "Top 100" landowners in the United States, landing at No. 82 on the list.

Using a front company called Whitefish Cascade Forest Resources, Chen bought almost 200,000 acres of timberland in Oregon in 2015 for $84 million, or $430 an acre. The real owner is Chen's Shanda Asset Management LLC, the magazine reported, citing Oregon tax records.

Chen owns more than the massive 312.5-square-mile tract in Oregon — he also owns Bull Springs Skyline Forest, a 33,000-acre tract of ponderosa pine (which the company currently has listed for sale at $95 million, or $2,800 an acre), as well as 500,000 acres in Ontario, Canada, and multimillion-dollar "landmark" U.S. estates in Manhattan and San Marino, California.

NPR reported back in June that the Chinese own nearly 400,000 acres of American land — and that's not including Chen's vast holdings. That land ownership "is highly concentrated," with more than 80 percent of it held by Smithfield Foods and billionaire Sun Guangxin through two front companies, Brazos Highland Properties LP and Harvest Texas LLC. "Sun used the companies to buy more than 100,000 acres in Texas for a wind farm [although] the project was ultimately halted by a state law designed to prevent foreigners from accessing the Texas grid," reported NPR. And last year, a Chinese food company bought 300 acres of land just 20 minutes away from Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota.

The Chinese land ownership raised the obvious concern that an enemy of the United States is vacuuming up large tracts of American land, which prompted the Senate in July to pass legislation prohibiting the sale of land to citizens of China, as well as of Iran, North Korea, and Russia. Said Texas Republican Senator John Cornyn, "It's no exaggeration to say that we've helped [China] build their economy into a near-peer status."

Bidenomics Is Bad for Business

Two recent polls of small-business owners refute the claim that Bidenomics is "building the economy from the middle out," and show instead that the massive governmental economic intervention is "hollowing out" that middle.

According to the Job Creators Network Foundation (JCNF) on January 11, just 24 percent of small businesses have a favorable view of current U.S. economic conditions. News website Independent Journal Review (IJR) reported on January 9 that worker information website Resume Builder found that more than half of U.S. companies are putting a hiring freeze in place. Two-thirds of U.S. companies laid off workers last year, and the outlook for 2024 remains bleak. Thirty-eight percent of companies said they will continue layoffs into the new year, with nearly a quarter of them expecting to lose at least a third of their workforces.

Noted IJR: "Business leaders at midsize companies (101 to 1,000 employees) are most likely to believe they will have layoffs (42 percent). In small companies with 100 or fewer employees, 28 percent of business leaders believe their organizations will have layoffs. At large companies (over 1,000 employees), 39 percent believe they will have layoffs."

Nearly 3,500 retail outlets closed last year, according to news website Talk Business & Politics, and equity analyst Michael Lasser predicts that 50,000 retail stores will close in the next five years.

Bidenomics is a massive, $2 trillion boondoggle that, according to CNN last year, is "focused on infrastructure, clean energy, and semiconductors," and that includes subsidies, grants, loans, and other federal financial assistance in order to provide every living soul in the country access to the internet. Even Bloomberg admitted on January 11 that Bidenomics is "government intervention in the economy to give an advantage to certain industries, companies, or goals, over others."

That's why three-quarters of those small businesses polled in December by the JCNF say they have a negative view of Biden's attempt to "build … from the bottom up and from the middle out."

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Hertz to Sell One-third of U.S. Electric Vehicle Fleet

Bloomberg reported on January 11 that — in a move that's almost certain to ding their corporate ESG score — car-rental giant Hertz is looking to sell 20,000 of its electric vehicles (EVs) in 2024. That represents approximately one-third of the company's U.S. fleet of EVs.

In an SEC filing dated January 11, Hertz Global Holdings stated that it hopes to use a portion of any proceeds from the sales to purchase gasoline-powered vehicles. The company said that at least part of the reason for the EV sell-off is the cost of maintaining the vehicles.

Hertz had previously announced a deal with Tesla to purchase 100,000 new EVs, and a deal with GM to purchase 175,000. In addition, they planned to purchase 65,000 from Polestar. The company still plans to follow through on those purchases, although it may take longer than first expected. It's as if Hertz put the electric-powered cart in front of the gas-powered horse.

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Despite an influx in the number and types of EVs over the past few years, consumers are still concerned about their price, reliability, and range. Additionally, in the United States, consumers have not seen enough moves toward a nationwide charging network. Right now at least, the EV experience is not as easy and seamless as the gas-powered vehicle experience — and it's far more expensive.

EV sellers are attempting to reduce costs to calm consumer fears about the new technology. Faced with overstocked 2023s, Tesla has reduced prices. GM is redesigning the Chevy Volt, which sold at under $30,000 before being discontinued last year, and has an electric Chevy Equinox listing at only $35,000 going into production.

Although EVs are quiet, you don't have to change the oil, there are no tailpipe emissions, etc., the technology isn't yet comparable to the more-reliable and less-expensive gasoline-powered vehicles. Why would anyone wish to pay more money for a less-reliable vehicle — especially when the main reason for switching to EVs is to address a climate-change problem that doesn't exist?

NYC Democrat Demands Biden Close Border

Nearly "2,000 migrants being sheltered in a tent shelter in New York City are being transferred to a nearby high school [James Madison High School], where the students will have to pivot to remote learning due to the disruption it is causing — sparking outrage from residents and local politicians," reported Fox News on January 10.

Among the students having to do the pivoting is the daughter of Democratic NYC Assemblywoman Jaime Williams, who says she wants Biden to close the border. Fox reported on November 11 that "Williams stressed the urgency in combating the migrant surge during 'The Ingraham Angle,' warning that the influx of asylum seekers is too much for the city to handle and must be dealt with immediately…. 'We have to turn off the main at the faucet, and that is closing our borders…. Close the borders and let's deal with the situation instead of putting the American citizens in a predicament where you have other people over them. It's unfair to each and every taxpaying American, not only in my district but in this country,' she continued."

The Democrats have allowed the "migrant surge" because statistics show that, upon being naturalized, such migrants will vote Democratic 70 to 90 percent of the time; i.e., Democrats are importing voters. Illegal aliens have already cast ballots in our elections, and a 2014 study found that illegal noncitizen votes could be substantial enough to sway elections.

In "vast numbers," *The Hill* pointed out in 2019, "[illegal aliens] can dramatically alter the Electoral College to favor Democrats for at least a decade because a state's electoral votes are based on the number of people residing within that state, not the number of citizens present when the Decennial Census is taken."

This is why left-wing politicians offer this foreign electoral army schools, hotels, and parks. Williams and other blue-state residents should remember that, if they'd long ago joined with those who'd safeguard our borders and had made clear that illegal entry cannot be tolerated, they perhaps wouldn't be in this situation. ■

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WHAT THEY SAID

"Trump lost recount after recount after recount in state after state. But in desperation and weakness, Trump and his MAGA followers went after election officials who ensured your power as a citizen would be heard. These public servants had their lives forever upended by attacks and death threats for simply doing their jobs."

President **Joe Biden** *put his spin on January 6 during his first campaign remarks of 2024.*

"I will be attending the Federal Appeals Court Arguments on Presidential Immunity in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday. Of course I was entitled, as President of the United States and Commander in Chief, to Immunity. I wasn't campaigning, the Election was long over. I was looking for voter fraud, and finding it, which is my obligation to do, and otherwise running our Country. If I don't get Immunity, then Crooked Joe Biden doesn't get Immunity, and with the Border Invasion and Afghanistan Surrender, alone, not to mention the Millions of dollars that went into his 'pockets' with money from foreign countries, Joe would be ripe for Indictment. By weaponizing the DOJ against his Political Opponent, ME, Joe has opened a giant Pandora's Box."

Donald Trump *posted the above on Truth Social on January 7.*

"Continuing increases in federal debt and Federal Reserve created inflation will lead to economic crisis caused by a rejection of the dollar's world reserve currency status. There is already resentment over the US government's use of the dollar's reserve status to support US sanctions. This is why Russia and Iran recently signed a deal to trade in their own currencies rather than in dollars and Russia is no longer accepting dollars for its oil."

Former Representative **Ron Paul** *(R-Texas) on January 8 predicted the economic reality for the year ahead.*

"Let me identify one fundamental problem here, and that is the fact that we have one governor in the State of Texas who is refusing to cooperate with other governors and other local officials and coordinate efforts to address a challenge that our country — which this country should stand united to address — that our country is facing. And it's a remarkable failure of governance to refuse to cooperate with one's fellow local and state officials."

Homeland Security Secretary **Alejandro Mayorkas** *is currently facing impeachment proceedings in the U.S. House for his management of the illegal immigration crisis, but on MSNBC's* Morning Joe *he called out Texas Republican Governor Greg Abbott for his migrant busing policy.*

"JUST IN: @Nikki Haley just called the cops on me and had me escorted out of her town hall in Iowa. I was literally just standing and her staff let me inside the event after they sent me confirmation of my tickets. How does Nikki Haley plan on dealing with Putin and Xi if she can't even handle Laura Loomer? Way to enforce the concept of weaponized government on the 3 year anniversary of January 6, Nikki!"

Investigative journalist, Trump supporter, and former Project Veritas operative **Laura Loomer** *called out Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley.*

"We have used our prosecutorial discretion to primarily focus on those who entered the building or those who engaged in violent or corrupt conduct on Capitol grounds. But if a person knowingly entered the restricted area, without authorization, they had already committed a federal crime. Make no mistake, thousands of people occupied the area that they were not authorized to be present in in the first place."

U.S. Attorney **Matthew Graves**, on the eve of the anniversary of January 6 this year, announced his intent to begin prosecuting people who never entered the Capitol.

AMERICA'S POLITICAL PRISONERS

ONE J6ER'S STORY

Oath Keeper Kelly Meggs is one of hundreds of U.S. citizens languishing in federal prisons. His story is an example of the political persecution they all endure.

by Rebecca Terrell

Behind me, two heavy steel doors shut with a fatalistic clash that conjures an image of Dante at the portal of Hell: "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here."

I've crossed the perimeter of a federal prison to meet one of the reputed "threats to our democracy," convicted of "storming the Capitol" on January 6, 2021.

A guard nonchalantly ushers me into a dreary room that gives the impression of a neglected small-town DMV. Haphazard rows of cheap plastic chairs litter the floor, and the walls are lined with discolored plastic placards bearing messages such as "NO PROFANITY" and other codes of conduct and dress for visitors. No one has yet bothered to remove the makeshift sign that reads "FACE MASKS REQUIRED BEYOND THIS POINT," though all ignore the directive.

"Just sit anywhere you see three chairs," the guard says, gesturing toward the rows as she takes her place with two colleagues at a raised desk area to the side of the room. The chairs are laid out in groups of four — three side-by-side facing a solo seat. I choose a cluster near the middle, a respectful distance from another visiting couple, where I can see out of a barred window into the interior yard. Even the sun seems to cast a different light there — the fault, perhaps, of the dirty glass.

My eyes wander about as I wait. At one end of the room there is a small, glass-enclosed office with a colorful steam engine smiling out from the far wall and children's toys stacked on top of a short table. A twin chamber next door to the playroom serves as a disorganized storage closet. Empty, unused vending machines, haphazardly covered with blue tarps, fill the back of the visitation room. The ceiling shows signs of water damage.

Just as boredom sets in, I glance back through the window. This time the yard isn't empty. A solitary figure, dressed in khaki trousers and matching short-sleeved shirt, is walking with a more resolute step than did the guard who escorted me. In another place, that clothing might suggest maintenance or janitorial staff. Not here.

Rebecca Terrell is a senior editor of The New American.

Kelly Meggs

Standing guard: Kelly Meggs, leader of Florida's Oath Keepers, provides security at a January 5, 2021 event outside the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C.

He is definitely an inmate, and not just any inmate. The man approaching me, unaware that I can already see him, is Kelly Meggs.

From Patriot to Prisoner

It's a name that three years ago would not have meant much to anyone outside his circle of family and friends. They knew him as a loving husband, father, and grandfather; a hard-working and honest businessman; a God-fearing Second Amendment advocate; and an animal lover with a penchant for barbecue and cold beer. Today, the federal government identifies this former head of Florida's Oath Keepers as a domestic terrorist and violent insurrectionist.

His has been one of the most high-profile J6 trials — the seditious conspiracy case against Oath Keepers founder Stuart Rhodes and four associates. Meggs' rap sheet paints an ugly picture: seditious conspiracy, conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding, obstruction of an official proceeding, conspiracy to prevent an officer from discharging duties, and tampering with documents or proceedings. Together, these could mean up to 86 years behind bars.

A November 2022 Department of Justice (DOJ) press release announcing his conviction by a "fair and impartial jury" said that immediately after the 2020 election, he and other Oath Keepers "began plotting." They organized "quick reaction force (QRF)" teams "prepared and willing to use force and to transport firearms and ammunition to Washington, D.C." They trained in "paramilitary combat tactics," and brought "knives, batons, camouflaged combat uniforms, tactical vests with plates, helmets, eye protection and radio equipment" to the Capitol to attempt a takeover. They breached the Capitol and used "force against law enforcement officers." Even after January 6, they continued "to plot … to oppose by force the lawful transfer of presidential power."

Authorities arrested Meggs on February 17, 2021, at his home in Dunnellon, Florida. Thereafter, prosecutors filed a brief quoting numerous texts, emails, and social-media posts from him. These depict him rallying others to "join the fight" on "the 6th when we are all in DC to insurrection," partnering with the Proud Boys and the Three Percenters, and providing lists of suggested provisions. During the trial, prosecutors showed the jury a patch Meggs had worn on January 6. It read: "I don't believe in anything. I'm just here for the violence." After leaving the Capitol, Meggs wrote in an online Signal chat: "We aren't quitting!! We are reloading!!"

Sentencing came in May 2023, in Washington, D.C., when U.S. District Court Judge Amit Mehta said Meggs was out of

touch with reality for asserting that police had invited people inside the Capitol. He also called Meggs absurd for claiming that he would be absolved if only more surveillance camera footage were made public. Prosecutors asked for a 21-year prison sentence; Mehta slapped the 54-year-old with 12, to be followed by three years of supervised release.

In DOJ statements, U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland said Meggs' actions posed a "grave threat" to our "democratic institutions." U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Christopher Wray declared that he had laid "siege on the U.S. Capitol." And Matthew Graves, U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, stated that the Oath Keeper conspired with his cohorts "to violently attack our government and our democracy."

So as I sit in this cheerless visitation room watching Meggs approach, I ponder what it will be like to meet the man face-to-face. Then a door next to the playroom opens, and he steps through.

His Story

The first thing I notice is not so much his six-foot-five stature as his broad smile and the friendly look in his eyes. His white mustache and beard give him a paternal air. He strides across the room and greets me warmly. "Hi, Rebecca! Great to see you!" to which I respond tongue in cheek: "Welcome to Memphis!"

We both laugh. Was I worried about meeting a vicious criminal? How silly. We take our seats.

"How are they treating you in here?" I ask, for he was transferred only last October to the Bluff City facility. Most of his incarceration has been spent in the infamous D.C. gulag — including nearly 300 days in solitary confinement. Meggs was responsible for the J6ers' nightly singing of the National Anthem.

He likes his new cellmate, who had prayed that God would send him a J6er as a "celly." The food is decent, as are most of the staff. He shows me the tattoos on his arms: "J6 Political Prisoner" on his right inside forearm, with a giant "We the People" scrolled down the outside, and "GATOR1" on his left wrist, indicating his position in Florida's Oath Keepers. He talks about his job on the prison's facilities, construction, and landscape crew, and improvements they're trying to make as the government converts the complex from medium to low security.

"If you're such a threat to society, why are you in a low-security prison?" I ask.

That question turned the conversation to J6. "We were there to provide a security detail for [former Trump political consultant] Roger Stone. We had Secret Service security clearance," Kelly explains.

Oath Keepers were accustomed to that role, the group being "a non-partisan association of current and formerly serving military, police, and first responders, who pledge … to defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic" — a description stated on the group's now-defunct website.

"It was a common request, if Oath Keepers could come and help with security," lifetime member Kate Hilton told Lara Logan on Truth in Media's "The Rest of the Story." Members have volunteered their time to work thousands of rescue and security missions since the group's founding in 2009. From riot control in places such as Ferguson, Missouri, to relief efforts following natural disasters, Oath Keepers donated their time, energy, and resources, and none was ever accused of a crime prior to J6.

"We weren't there to instigate violence," Kelly explains. "We were there to prevent people from getting hurt, just as we've done many times before."

He texted Rhodes that morning, "We're in," indicating that Secret Service had just admitted his team to the restricted area at the White House Ellipse. "But they used that against me in court, as if I texted him after we went inside the Capitol. The time stamps prove otherwise, but it didn't matter."

It wasn't the only message taken out of context. The conversation surrounding his "insurrection" comment proves it was a reference to the expectation that Trump would invoke the Insurrection Act if militant agitators such as Antifa caused trouble. The president had promised to do so during the 2020 Black Lives Matter (BLM) riots following George Floyd's death, and Kelly's texts and social-media posts reveal that he was coordinating with others on the security detail, as well as with D.C. Metro Police and the U.S. Secret Service, to protect against potential left-wing counterprotesters.

AP Images

Patriot leader: Stuart Rhodes founded the Oath Keepers in 2009, dubbing its members "Guardians of the Republic" who pledge the motto: "Not on our watch!"

"That's why we wore riot gear to the rally — in case people threw things or attacked us." It's also why they had backup QRF teams at the ready. "Security plans often involve backup teams in case they're needed," Kelly explains. "The FBI does the same thing."

The Fateful Afternoon

After the Ellipse rally, Kelly and his companions made their way to the Capitol, where, unbeknownst to them, barricades had already been breached. None of them knew they were entering a restricted area.

In fact, according to their security clearance, they were supposed to report to an outside staging area. "We couldn't find it, so we didn't know exactly what to do." They spotted friends standing on stairs outside the east entrance and filed up in their now-infamous stack formation to join them — nothing nefarious, simply a routine method to avoid getting separated in the crowd.

AP Images

Federal Bureau of Injustice? In congressional testimony, FBI Director Christopher Wray (front) denied that his agents played a decisive role in January 6, but further investigations contradict him, according to Representative Clay Higgins (R-La.).

"There wasn't any violence. Everyone was just singing patriotic songs like *God Bless America* and waving flags and banners," Kelly remembers. "Then we heard a loud bang behind us and climbed to the top of the stairs to see what happened." Someone had opened the doors from the inside, and when the crowd outside saw it, they surged forward. "There wasn't anything you could do to stop from going in at that point." Worried that the onrush would trample his wife, Connie, who had been with him all day, Kelly warned her, "Stay on your feet! No matter what happens, stay on your feet!"

Once in the building, they found themselves on the edge of the Rotunda (underneath the Capitol's central dome) and near the hallway leading to the House speaker's office, where they saw Capitol Hill Police Officer Harry Dunn.

"He was freaking out, screaming and yelling," recalls Kelly. "He was saying things like 'They're killing us!' and something about if he gets taken out, he'll take a lot of people with him. And he had a rifle. So another Oath Keeper, Ken Harrelson, talked with him and helped calm him down."

Harrelson then rallied his fellows, who stood guard around Dunn, protecting him for more than five minutes. "On his first FBI 302, he acknowledged that we helped him, forming a barrier between him and the crowd," Kelly recounts.

An FBI 302 is an interview report form used by agents during investigations. Those associated with Kelly's trial are under a court order preventing them from being made public. However, The Blaze investigative journalist Steve Baker obtained two of them and said he found deceptions.

Kelly says he found several as well. On his second 302, Dunn waffled, according to Kelly. "I didn't tell them they could stand there. They just did," Kelly paraphrases. By the third interview, Dunn's story had taken a drastic turn, Kelly says. "They were yelling at me." Then, in court on October 31, 2022, Dunn testified, "They were trying to get past me, and I stopped them."

Independent journalist Stephen Horn captured the encounter on video during two hours of continuous footage. It should have cleared matters up, but when the video was shown in court, the portion that displayed Oath Keepers aiding Harry Dunn was mysteriously missing. "As soon as you caught a glimpse of me off to the right, the screen went black," Kelly says. "It stayed that way for about 30 seconds, and when it came back up, Horn is standing in the Rotunda."

Kelly was told it was the only copy of that video, but last summer, another J6 family in a separate trial produced the unedited version. "It's not 30 seconds that's missing. There are three minutes missing from the version they showed in my trial!" Kelly exclaims.

He believes those three minutes would reveal the truth. Without them, "it was our word against theirs," Kelly laments, citing Dunn's testimony as well as that of U.S. Capitol Police Special Agent David Lazarus. The latter testified in court that he ran past Dunn outside the speaker's office several times and witnessed his colleague's "antagonistic" encounter with the Oath Keepers while he himself "rescued" some of Pelosi's staffers.

But this past November, never-before-released photos from Capitol security cameras show that Lazarus was elsewhere when the Oath Keepers were helping Harry Dunn. U.S. Representative Barry Loudermilk (R-Ga.), chairman of the Committee on House Administration's Subcommittee on Oversight, gave Baker time-stamped screen shots of Lazarus' movements that day.

"What he testified to witnessing between Dunn and four Oath Keepers on #Jan6, he simply could not have seen, because Lazarus was in another Senate office building across the street from Constitution Ave.," wrote Baker in a post on X.

The photos are part of 40,000 hours of Capitol surveillance footage being released over time by U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) beginning last November. Loudermilk's subcommittee is slowly uploading portions of that video to an online viewing room.

Will it help Kelly? He's not convinced. After all, at sentencing, Judge Mehta admitted that neither he nor his companions assaulted police.

Kelly wonders if it could help his wife. Connie Meggs is currently serving her 15-month sentence in a federal detention center in Miami. "She went into [Bureau of Prisons] custody on Halloween," Kelly winces. "Way to ruin it for my grandkids."

Connie was arrested the same day as her husband, and spent 45 days in jail and then 2½ years on home detention with an ankle monitor. Baker reported on X that during Connie's sentencing, "Mehta falsely stated: 'You decided to come to Washington with a truck full of guns. You decided to go up those steps. You decided to follow Kelly Meggs into Speaker Pelosi's suite.'"

But neither of them brought guns to D.C., nor did they enter Pelosi's office. The reality is that the couple spent less than 20 minutes inside the Capitol, damaged nothing, assaulted no one. In fact, as they were leaving, Kelly stopped to help Capitol Police officers remove protesters from the building.

Double Standard

A truth-be-damned approach and brutal sentencing seem par for the course for J6ers. Take Enrique Tarrio, leader of the Proud Boys, who is currently serving 22 years, though he was not in Washington, D.C., nor did he commit any acts of violence in relation to the 2020 election. Internal messages among Proud Boys members were marked by the same boastful bravado as that of the Oath Keepers, but U.S. government investigators could not find a single communication among more than half a million in which Tarrio ordered anyone to interfere with the election certification, let alone cause an insurrection. In fact, a week before January 6, their leader reminded Proud Boys to obey police lines.

"The government's entire case rested on the idea that the Proud Boys had a secret and unspoken plan to overthrow America's democratic republic and replace it with a dictatorship led by former president Donald J. Trump," explain Alex Gutentag and Michael Shellenberger on their Public Substack. However, they say, the evidence demonstrated no plan, secret or implicit, and "the idea that there was [a plan] is a conspiracy theory."

Nevertheless, not only is "Tarrio's sentence longer than the median time served in state prison for murder, rape and other violent offenses," but "his sentence is also significantly longer than if you light someone on fire in the name of Black Lives Matter." They cite the case of Montez Lee, an arsonist who killed a man during a 2020 riot protesting George Floyd's death in Minneapolis.

In a bitterly ironic twist, on the day of Tarrio's sentencing, the Department of Justice argued on behalf of Lee, cutting their usual sentencing guidelines for his crime in half — from 20 down to 10 years. In a sentencing memorandum, DOJ claimed that Lee was among "many people who felt angry, frustrated and disenfranchised," and in his defense even quoted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. from a 1966 CBS interview: "We've got to see that a riot is the language of the unheard."

Therefore, "in demanding harsh sentences for nonviolent January 6 rioters and leniency for violent BLM rioters," reads the Public post, "Biden's Justice Department is openly engaging in political prosecutions."

Moreover, consider the disparity in numbers.

Official estimates put 2020 BLM riot participants in the millions. Nationwide, they caused at least 25 deaths (including a retired police captain), hundreds of injuries, and billions of dollars in property damage. Yet, according to the Associated Press, federal prosecutors brought charges against a scant 300 people connected with those riots. In local jurisdictions across the country, "most citations and charges against George Floyd protesters were ultimately dropped, dismissed or otherwise not filed," reported *The Guardian*.

In contrast, federal prosecutors have charged more than 1,200 people connected with J6, though only about 2,000 protesters entered the Capitol. And that's only the beginning. Early in January, Graves announced the Biden administration's intent to begin prosecuting people who never entered the building.

AP Images

National hero? Presidential Citizens Medal recipient and former Capitol Hill Police Officer Harry Dunn testified against Oath Keepers and has publicly complained about suffering PTSD from January 6. He is now running for office in Maryland's 3rd Congressional District.

Whistleblowers

However, it seems that not all present on the Hill that day were actual protesters.

In 2022, several FBI whistleblowers revealed that undercover officers, confidential informants, and agency assets swelled the J6 crowds at the Capitol. Director Wray had previously dodged questions on that topic before the House Homeland Security Committee, calling it "categorically false" to suggest that FBI agents "in some way instigated or orchestrated January 6."

Louisiana Republican Clay Higgins was the congressman interrogating him. "The FBI assets that were dressed as Trump supporters … were there to specifically wave in the Trump supporters that had gathered outside the Capitol," Higgins revealed on "The Tucker Carlson Encounter" in January. (See article on page 19.)

U.S. House investigations leading to that conclusion were spurred by whistleblowers such as FBI intelligence analyst George Hill, who divulged that the agency refused to release video to its own Boston Field Office for fear of incriminating undercover agents or confidential informants.

For their heroism, say the whistleblowers, their lives have been ruined. "The FBI will crush you. This government will crush you and your family if you try to expose the truth about things they are doing that are wrong," testified whistleblower and U.S. military veteran Garrett O'Boyle before the House Judiciary Committee in May 2023.

Retaliation is a typical tactic of self-righteous leftists, who actually support violence if it forwards their subversive agenda. Vice President Kamala Harris showed herself a champion of George Floyd rioters in a June 1, 2020, tweet: "If you're able to, chip in now to the @MNFreedomFund to help post bail for those protesting on the ground in Minnesota."

Massachusetts Democrat and Squad member Representative Ayanna Pressley fell in lockstep on MSNBC's *AM Joy* program, encouraging BLM rioters and looters. "There needs to be unrest in the streets for as long as there's unrest in our lives," she stoked.

"Too many see the protests as the problem. No, the problem is what forced your fellow citizens to take to the streets: persistent, poisonous inequities and injustice," wailed CNN anchor Chris Cuomo, in support of George Floyd dissidents. Ignoring the First Amendment ("the right of the people peaceably to assemble"), this brother of then-New York Governor Andrew Cuomo demanded, "Show me where it says protesters are supposed to be polite and peaceful."

AP Images

Targeted: Proud Boys leader Enrique Tarrio was not in Washington, D.C., on January 6, 2021, but he is currently serving a 22-year prison sentence for seditious conspiracy and other felonies related to the protest.

Harsh Sentencing

Such concessions are not extended to J6ers, least of all by Biden's so-called Justice Department. Kelly points out what he calls an unprecedented and "sinister" application of law that judges in J6 trials are relying on to "pull off these harsher, unconstitutional sentences."

They have consistently invoked 18 U.S.C. § 1512, a law related to "tampering with a witness, victim or an informant." Part (c) of the statute was added in 2002 as part of the Sarbanes-Oxley response to the Enron scandal, and it includes an umbrella statement that condemns anyone who "(2) otherwise obstructs, influences, or impedes any official proceeding, or attempts to do so." That offense incurs a sentence of up to 20 years.

Kelly says that the court applied 1512(c)(2) to him for two reasons. First, "for obstructing an official proceeding which I was not near until 30 minutes after it adjourned and left four hours before it restarted." Second, because he deleted an Oath Keepers group chat concerning their J6 security detail from his phone on January 7, one day after the incident and more than a month before his arrest. "Of course I deleted it. It's what I do every time we finish doing security. I didn't need it anymore."

Moreover, Kelly explains, previous case law shows a "clear and solid foundation of applying 1512(c) to judicial proceedings" that involve evidence tampering. Judges are now ignoring that precedent by labeling *legislators'* certification of presidential election results as a *judicial* proceeding. Furthermore, they are disregarding the more obvious 18 U.S.C. § 1505, "obstruction of proceedings before departments, agencies and committees," which carries a sentence of not more than five years. "Had I actually committed an act of terrorism," Kelly exclaims, "the time would have been limited to eight years maximum!" He rhetorically asks, "Why use 1512 other than its 20-year max sentencing?"

"If you notice, all of the January 6th

"They knew we were innocent. The lead prosecutor sent an email to our attorneys that said we did no planning to enter the Capitol on J6. Yet we are charged with conspiracy to overthrow the government?"

AP Images

"Mostly peaceful": Leftists whitewashed 2020's violent BLM riots, despite more than two dozen deaths, hundreds of injuries, and billions of dollars in property damage nationwide. Meanwhile, non-violent J6ers are demonized as domestic terrorists.

cases reference other January 6th cases in determining that the charges are correct," he notes. "This is judicial collusion the likes of which no one has ever seen before."

Several J6ers have petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to challenge DOJ's use of the statute. Oral arguments will take place this spring, with a decision due before the Court's recess in the summer.

So J6ers are left waiting. But Kelly is making the most of his time. Along with his job, he plays in a couple of bands at the prison, an appropriate pastime in Elvis Presley's hometown.

He has also completed one book and is working on another. The first, composed for charity and due for publication this spring, is entitled *One Question Remains*. "It is an overview of the current political situation, the military-industrial complex," the prison system, and January 6, Kelly explains. The second book will tell his personal story, which is still unfolding.

Hope Amid Suffering

It's also multifaceted. First, there's the financial annihilation. Capital One canceled the Meggs' credit cards "for business reasons," despite Kelly's stellar credit and payment history. "Bank of America closed our account only after reporting us to the FBI for being in DC on January 6th. This happened without a subpoena; they just turned over our personal finance records to the feds," he says. His investment company also closed his accounts. Only local credit unions will service the family now.

Kelly's retirement is gone as well. "I had to sell a rental home and cash out my 401(k) just so my family could live for the past three years." Between attorney fees and regular monthly expenses on his five-acre farm, Kelly worries they will lose everything.

Yet "once you get past the horror of having everything you've worked for your whole life ripped apart and destroyed, the financial loss is the least of your worries." What concerns him most is what "can never be recovered — time with my family."

He longs for his wife, with whom communication has been entirely cut off since her incarceration. "We've been married for 26 years. I haven't seen her in over a year and have seen her only one time with a brief hug in three years." A line from a favorite song, "To you, I'm just a man. To me, you're all I am," stays with him daily. "I've never loved her more than I do now. But when you're ripped apart for days then weeks then months and years, it takes you way beyond anything you can imagine."

His eyes glow with pride when he talks about his son, Zack, now age 25, who manages the farm and finances. His daughter lives in a separate house on the property with her three children. Without a father in the picture, they have now also lost both grandparents. Kelly's "little buddy" was only nine years old when authorities ripped his grandfather away. The toddler, then two, no longer has her "Pappa."

"She would come to my big chair with her bottle every night when she got tired and put her hands up," Kelly remembers as tears well. "She would lay on my chest, and I would rub her back and hair until she fell asleep. Every night I still think about it and get choked up. She is almost five now, and those years were stolen not only from me, but also from her."

The youngest "doesn't even know me." With all the financial constraints and more than 700 miles separating them, visits aren't possible. It's particularly cruel, since "the same type of prison I am in sits just 30 minutes from my house."

AP Images

Friend of J6: FBI Whistleblower Stephen Friend, a Florida SWAT team member, refused to participate in what he called unnecessarily harsh raids for J6 misdemeanors. In return, the agency suspended him.

"These are the things that bother me most. They took time away from my family that can never, ever be replaced. I can always make money again, but I cannot ever get those years with my grandkids back."

He sums up the plight of J6ers:

> The attack on J6 defendants doesn't stop after arrest. It has just begun. They said it from the very start: "We want to make sure no one ever questions our authority again."
>
> They knew we were innocent. The lead prosecutor sent an email to our attorneys that said we did no planning to enter the Capitol on J6. Yet we are charged with conspiracy to overthrow the government?
>
> Our government is completely out of control. They are no longer protecting life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. They are derailing it in the interest of lining their own pockets and pushing an evil, demonic agenda against our republic.
>
> The idea of a Deep State or One World Government or Global Elites is no longer a conspiracy theory. It is rampant everywhere, from transgender indoctrination of our children to climate change to the invasion at our southern border. It's out in the open. Why? They control the media, the corporations, the banks. They poison our population with vaccines and send our money overseas to fund a war that we started. If you stand up, they will succeed with their false charges against you, because they control the judges.

"They wanted me to lie and tell a false story about Stuart Rhodes, but I refuse to lie," Kelly asserts, having been told by an attorney that prosecutors dangled that carrot in return for a plea bargain. "So they lied about me. They had officers lie on the stand, and when we asked for a new cross examination after we discovered the lie, we were denied. They even got one of my attorneys disbarred."

I ask Kelly for the solution. "The opposite of evil is good," he responds. "Good has much more power than evil. That's how we ended the *One Question Remains* book. It's a challenge to Christians to get involved politically and vote our country back from the ground up."

We're interrupted by a loud voice from behind me, which jolts us both. "Fifteen minutes!" shouts one of the guards. Kelly and I instinctively glance at a small clock on the wall and look at each other in shock. I've been there for nearly four hours!

"Time flies when you're having fun," I joke.

He grins broadly and thanks me for the visit. But on a serious note, he leaves me with a final thought:

"I never considered myself a patriot. A patriot goes into battle knowing he may die. I just went to a rally to do security to protect people and speak up against what I felt was wrong with an election," he says.

"*They* put this moniker on all of us J6 guys. We never asked for it. But I can promise you we do wear it with honor. When we sing the Anthem, we scream the last words of the line 'that our flag was STILL THERE,' knowing the country our Founding Fathers built is STILL THERE! It may be the death of us, but we will never stop singing that song or wearing that badge of honor." ■

Author's note: Kelly asked me to thank everyone who has helped him, especially people who have sent letters of support through the years. Many of those do not include a return address; he believes fear of retaliation may play a role in that. He wants everyone to know that he fully understands, but it is also important to him that they realize how much their support is appreciated. Those who wish to contact him or any other J6ers can find their contact information at PatriotMailProject.com. Support and prayers can also be sent to their struggling families at GiveSendGo.com.

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INSURRECTION OR FEDGOV OPERATION?

Representative Clay Higgins has revealed the truth about the J6 "insurrection" and confirmed what many suspected: It was a government operation all along.

The truth: Representative Clay Higgins (R-La.) has been very vocal about what he believes truly happened on January 6, 2021.

AP Images

by Paul Dragu

Louisiana Congressman Clay Higgins understands and can explain with the best of them — likely better — what happened on January 6, 2021. And he has fearlessly followed the evidence.

On the three-year anniversary of J6, Tucker Carlson published a 38-minute interview with Higgins about what his investigations into that fateful day have yielded. It won't surprise *TNA* readers to learn that Higgins discovered a "conspiracy at the highest levels," a conspiracy designed to entrap Trump supporters and destroy MAGA altogether on J6.

"You ask, who planned this?" Higgins told Carlson. "This would be a combination of several of the most extreme, liberal, anti-Trump, anti-America First factions that were in positions of authority within our law-enforcement organizations and the Democrat Party across the country. To find that level of conspiratorial corruption at the highest levels of the FBI has been very troubling to me as a man, as a cop."

In November, Higgins had an intense exchange with FBI Director Christopher Wray during a House Homeland Security Committee hearing. "Your day is coming," Higgins famously told Wray after revealing that the FBI bused in hordes of agents dressed as Trump supporters on J6 weekend. Because Higgins is, in fact, still a cop.

Higgins said the FBI and elements within the Democratic Party had been staging the J6 setup for 10 months before it happened. He said FBI agents burrowed into MAGA circles: "The FBI had embedded themselves into various groups online across the country of Americans.… The FBI worked undercover to infiltrate those conversations."

Why do something so subversive, so un-American?

According to Higgins,

> Their objective was to destroy the entire MAGA movement, to forever stain the patriotic fervor that was associated with the America First MAGA movement that had won in 2016 and we believe won again in 2020. And the establishment on both sides of both major parties were determined to smash that out of existence, not just by defeating Trump, but by destroying the reputations of the movement itself by creating this narrative that … America First Republicans were somehow a danger to our Republic and a domestic threat.

The Louisiana congressman's office had been investigating J6 before Republicans won the House of Representatives in the 2022 midterm elections. Afterward, he joined his findings and investigatory efforts with those of the Homeland Security Committee.

Higgins believes that FBI agents not only infiltrated online MAGA groups and embedded themselves on the ground on January 4, 5, and 6, but went so far as to instigate the violence, a notion the FBI director has denied. Nonetheless, according to Higgins, "Some of that evidence shockingly reveals that the FBI agents that were operating undercover within the online groups were the first ones to plant the seeds of suggestions of a more radical occupation of the Capitol."

On January 9, 2024, Ray Epps, a man caught on video telling people numerous times to storm the Capitol, received a sentence of probation. Even the folks at the establishment political news outlet *The Hill* couldn't help but notice that justice was off-balance when considering the sentences of other J6ers. One of their news anchors pointed out that, by contrast, Proud Boys leader Enrique Tar-

Paul Dragu is a senior editor for The New American *and host of* The New American Daily *show.*

rio, who wasn't even physically present at the Capitol, received a 22-year prison sentence.

Epps, to all rational observers, looks every part a federal asset. He's former military (a very common attribute among federal assets), he consistently urged people to storm the Capitol, and then, unlike the others, he got away with it. Epps and prosecutors involved in his case have denied that he's a federal agent.

James Howard Kunstler discussed in his weekly column why he believed the Deep State was willing to risk its propaganda optics with Epps:

> I'll tell you one reason Ray didn't get, like, twenty years, nor two years of pre-trial detention in the reeking, roach-infested DC lockup, or massive fines, like other J-6 defendants: Because he told his handlers in no uncertain terms that he would blow their cover and vivisect them publicly on the whole fed J-6 operation if they so much as made him show up in person for any proceeding — and, of course, he "attended" his sentencing by phone, in a Zoom meeting from a remote location.

Higgins believes FBI assets were not only pushing people to storm the Capitol, but were waiting inside to give the "insurrectionists" a tour:

> On the inside, you had FBI assets dressed as Trump supporters that knew their way around the Capitol … before the doors opened, otherwise how are you going to get around the Capitol? It's just not possible. You have to have a guide, and on January 6, the guides were FBI assets and they were dressed as Trump supporters and they were positioned inside the Capitol prior to the doors being open.

So how many FBI assets were involved in the J6 conspiracy? According to Higgins,

> Based upon some very conservative but hard investigative effort evaluation of the numbers, from putting together eyewitnesses and videos and affidavit statements and whistleblower statements and court records that have been revealed through individual criminal cases where J6 defendants have been prosecuted and smart attorneys have forced admissions by the DOJ and the FBI … conservative estimates would put the number of FBI assets in the crowd outside and working inside at well over two hundred.

He said he believes there were more, but two hundred is a number he's very comfortable with. He said the conspiracists' ultimate goal was to set "the stage for arrest and prosecution."

Furthermore, Higgins believes, "There's no daylight between the compromised election cycle of November 2020 and ultimately what happened on J6." J6 and the stolen election are part of the same conspiratorial package.

After hearing all this, Carlson soberly acknowledged that we have a major problem. "What you're describing," the popular news host said, "is a government within a government."

He asked Higgins what recourse patriotic Americans have to deal with such a corrupt and illegal situation.

Higgins' answer:

> Well, in America, a question becomes reasonable when we face a crisis like this: Who investigates the investigators? And the answer in America is Congress. So we have the responsibility to investigate through the appropriate committees, which we're certainly doing that now that we have a Republican majority in control of the committees. But we don't have the power to arrest. We can give criminal referrals based upon our efforts, but we have to have a DOJ that's receptive to the criminal referrals. So we've hit quite a brick wall, have we not?

How do we get over that wall?

"Until you have a president running the executive branch that will clean house at the DOJ and FBI at the highest levels and put American patriots in place that will act upon the criminal referrals that Congress provides, then none of those guys are going to get arrested because they're not going to arrest themselves," Higgins says. ■

AP Images

Fed? Ray Epps was caught on video telling people multiple times to storm the Capitol. For his actions, he was sentenced to a year probation, a sentence many believe is unjust, considering that other J6ers are serving years in prison for less egregious actions.

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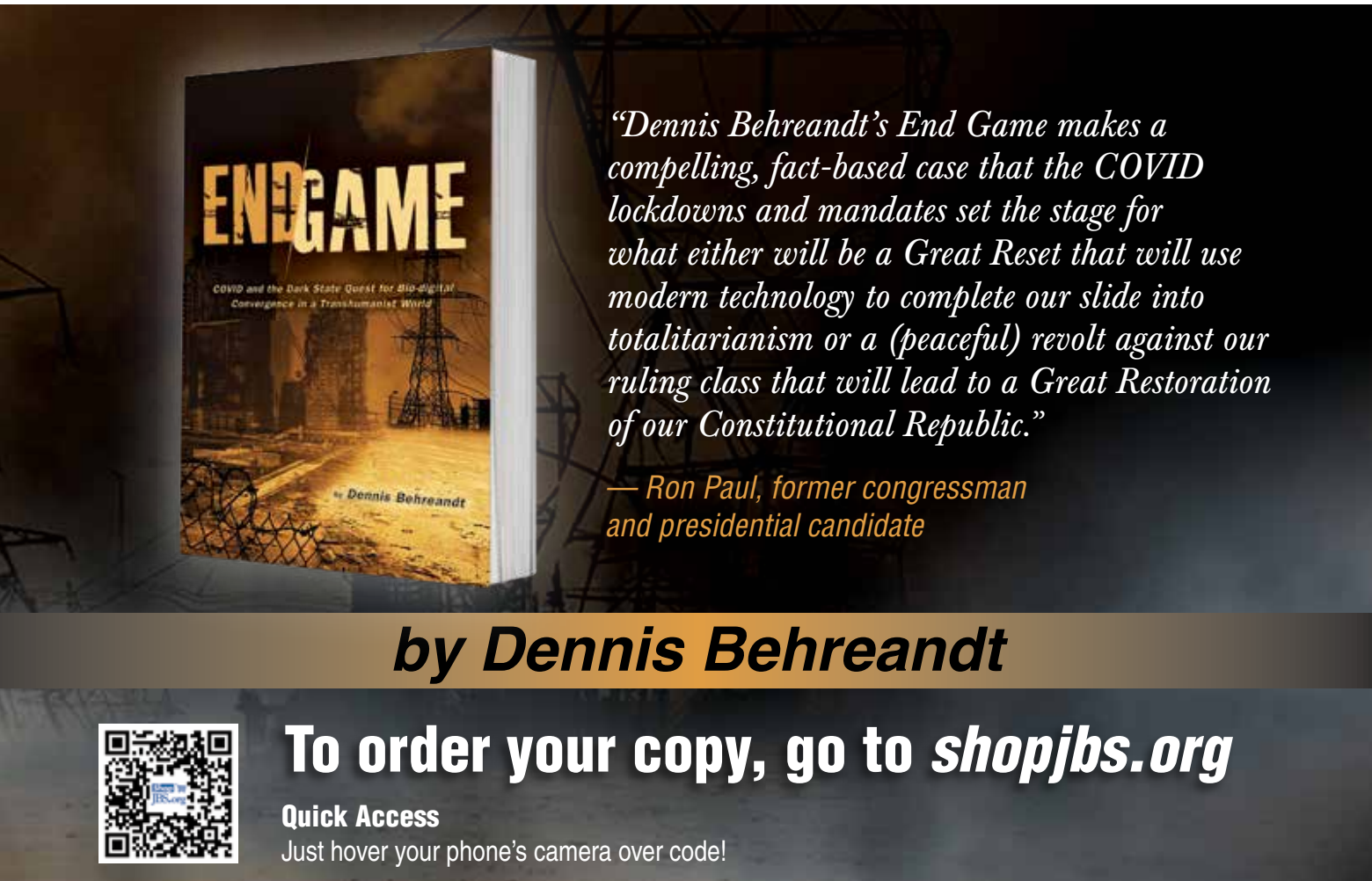
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Defying Francis' Same-sex Blessings

Pope Francis' recent approval of blessings for same-sex couples has shocked many Catholic faithful and drawn protests from bishops and clergy worldwide.

Blessing sin? Pope Francis' declaration permitting priests to bless same-sex couples has caused a global furor and a sharp division among cardinals, bishops, priests, theologians, and lay faithful worldwide.

AP Images

by William F. Jasper

Worldwide Catholic opposition to the Vatican's pre-Christmas declaration allowing blessings for same-sex couples has continued to escalate since the revolutionary papal document was issued. *Fiducia Supplicans* ("Supplicating Trust") was released on December 18, one week before Christmas, by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF), headed by the recently installed Cardinal Víctor Manuel "Tucho" Fernández of Argentina. Fernández, a controversial and heterodox Jesuit, is a longtime friend, protégé, and advisor of Pope Francis, dating back to the pope's years as Archbishop Jorge Bergoglio in Buenos Aires. Fernández' "liberal" views on sexuality stirred concerns as far back as 1995, when he became known as the "Kissing Priest" due to his authorship of the now-infamous erotic book *Heal Me With Your Mouth: The Art of Kissing*.

His appointment as titular archbishop of Tiburnia, Italy, in May 2013 (Pope Francis' first episcopal consecration) was viewed by Vatican watchers as an unmistakable signal of seismic changes to come. Fernández has served as the main ghostwriter for Francis' most radical documents: *Laudato Si'* on global warming and the environment (2015) and *Amoris Laetitia* on marriage and the family (2016). In 2018, he was elevated to the archbishopric of La Plata, Argentina. In 2023, Pope Francis named him prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and bestowed on him a cardinal's red hat.

William F. Jasper is a senior editor of The New American.

"Scandalous," "Self-Contradictory," "Deceitful," "Blasphemous"

According to Cardinal Fernández, the new directive on blessings, *Fiducia Supplicans* (subtitled "On the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings"), "remains firm on the traditional doctrine of the Church about marriage," and does not allow "any type of liturgical rite or blessing similar to a liturgical rite that can create confusion."

That is not how many Catholic prelates, theologians, and lay faithful see it. Cardinals, bishops, and national conferences of Catholic clergy are denouncing the proposed formula for blessings as "confusing," "disingenuous," "scandalous," "self-contradictory," "deceitful,"

"blasphemous," "a great deception," and replete with "diabolical ambiguity," "cunning sophistries," "casuistry," and "dissimulation."

The Catholic bishops of Africa have been especially vigorous in rejecting any move toward normalizing sodomy under the guise of "pastoral accompaniment." The bishops conferences of Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Togo, Zambia, and Zimbabwe have made it known they do not intend to implement the "innovative" new Fernández-Bergoglio theology. They have been joined by cardinals, bishops, bishops conferences, and priestly confraternities from Hungary, Poland, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Peru, Uruguay, Australia, Brazil, and Argentina. Except for a few notable exceptions, the response from U.S. bishops, by comparison, has been milquetoast.

Wote vs. "Woke"

"I hereby prohibit all priests in the Catholic Diocese of Wote from blessing couples in irregular situations or same-sex couples," Bishop Paul Kariuki Njiru of the Catholic Diocese of Wote, Kenya, said in a letter to his diocese on December 27, 2023. "I am of the opinion that Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández of the Dicastery of Doctrine of Faith should have widely done enough consultation before releasing such a controversial declaration," Bishop Njiru continued. He noted that "this declaration totally contradicts what Pope Francis himself approved in 2021 concerning same-sex unions," referring to the orthodox ruling by the same Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith two years earlier, which stated, "It is not licit to impart a blessing on relationships, or partnerships, even stable, that involve sexual activity outside of marriage … as is the case of the unions between persons of the same sex."

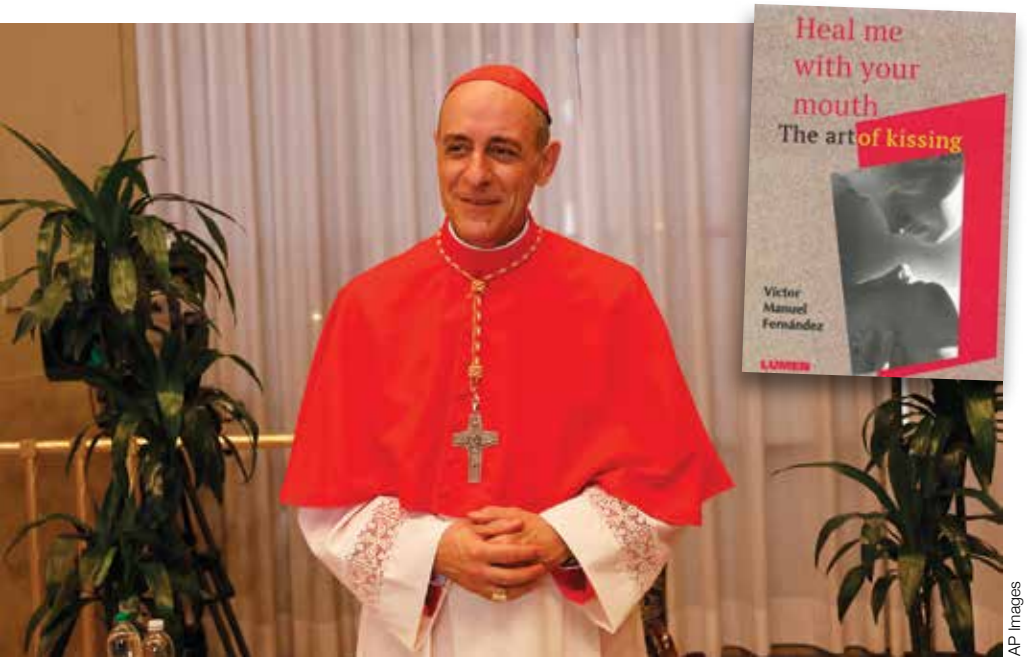
Blessing Sin: The Great Reversal

The 2021 DDF response to questions about blessings further restated traditional Christian moral theology: "God Himself never ceases to bless each of His pilgrim children in this world…. But he does not and cannot bless sin: He blesses sinful man, so that he may recognize that he is part of His plan of love and allow himself to be changed by Him."

That response was written by Cardinal Luis F. Ladaria Ferrer, Fernández' predecessor as prefect of the DDF. As expected, his confirmation of biblical and Church teaching on adultery and sodomy inflamed "progressive" clerics in the Church and their militant LGBTQ lobby allies. Thus, Ladaria Ferrer (who is no conservative) had to go, and with him all vestiges of pre-Francis moral theology. It seemed to be a sure thing among the Vatican press corps that Pope Francis was going to appoint Germany's radical Bishop Heiner Wilmer as Ladaria Ferrer's replacement. To great surprise, however, Bishop Wilmer was passed over in favor of Fernández. That was probably due to Wilmer's high media profile among the far-left German bishops, whose boisterously heretical tantrums were then jeopardizing the charade surrounding the wildly woke Synod on Synodality, which Team Francis was taking pains to pass off as the authentic voice of "the People of God." A Bishop Wilmer-led DDF would have been disastrous for the Catholic Church, but has Archbishop (now Cardinal Prefect) Fernández' leadership proven to be any less so?

Bishop Njiru says "what is disturbing" in *Fiducia Supplicans* "is that, on one hand, it directs the priests to bless these couples without specifying what exactly is being blessed, while on the other hand, it expressly forbids any ritual text that might specify it. For Pastoral reasons, I therefore, exhort my priests to invite those couples to a life of conversion by the words of the Gospel 'Repent, and believe in the Gospel' (Mark 1,14)."

Bishop Njiru concludes by saying, "The Declaration of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith 'FIDUCIA SUPPLICANS' should be rejected in totality and we faithfully uphold the Gospel teachings and Catholic traditional teachings on Marriage and sexuality." (Emphasis in original.)



AP Images

"Kissing Cardinal": The author of the blessing declaration, Cardinal Fernández, is also the author of the scandalously erotic book *The Art of Kissing*, and the even more salacious, recently discovered book *Mystical Passion: Spirituality and Sensuality*.

"We Know Your Ultimate Goal"

Bishop Martin Mtumbuka of Karonga Diocese in Malawi has provided one of the most impassioned and eloquent defenses of orthodox opposition to *Fiducia Supplicans*. In a video-recorded homily on December 24, he urged the faithful of his diocese to "forget and ignore this controversial and apparently blasphemous declaration in its entirety."

"Do pastors do things like this in good faith? Or was this document written mainly to gain cheap popularity?" the Malawian bishop asked. "It would seem

Of course, *Fiducia Supplicans* was not universally condemned. As could be predicted, there was plenty of rejoicing among pro-LGBTQ+ "Catholic" politicians, bishops, priests, and NGO activists, all of which was generously covered by the pro-LGBTQLMNOP+++ Fake News media.

YouTube

"Blasphemous Declaration": Bishop Martin Mtumbuka of Malawi expressed the staunch opposition of African bishops to *Fiducia Supplicans*: "We have no choice; we cannot allow such an offensive and apparently blasphemous declaration to be implemented in our Dioceses."

in many parts of the world, certainly many people have celebrated this document as a sign of progress in the church, and the popularity of its drafters has certainly increased," he said.

However, Bishop Mtumbuka declared, *Fiducia Supplicans* "looks to us like a heresy; it reads like a heresy; and it effects heresy." He expounded further:

> The document asks us to bless two people of same sex as individuals, but not as a couple. So, these two people of same sex who the previous night slept together like a couple, and present themselves to us as a couple are blessed as individuals, but they leave our presence as a couple; they go to their homes as a couple; they sleep in the same bed as a couple; but the document says they're not blessed as a couple, although they appear to have been blessed like a couple. How could this be not changing the authentic teaching of the Church?

"It's sad," Bishop Mtumbuka lamented. "The Catholic Church is old, as old as Christianity itself; this has never happened before. But we have no choice; we cannot allow such an offensive and apparently blasphemous declaration to be implemented in our Dioceses."

"We Formally Forbid All Blessings of 'Homosexual Couples'"

"We, the Bishops of Cameroon, reiterate our disapproval of homosexuality and homosexual unions," the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon (NECC) declared in its two-page, nine-point statement of December 21, 2023. "Consequently, we formally forbid all blessings of 'homosexual couples' in the Church of Cameroon." The Cameroonian bishops particularly take umbrage with the DDF declaration's tortured effort to create an "innovative" distinction without a difference between same-sex "unions" and "couples," and between "pastoral" and "liturgical" blessings. The NECC statement says that "Differentiating between liturgical and non-liturgical contexts in order to apply the blessing to same sex 'couples' is hypocritical." "We therefore declare non-compliant any form of blessing, public or private, that tends to recognize 'same-sex couples' as a state of life," the bishops state.

Of course, *Fiducia Supplicans* was not universally condemned. As could be predicted, there was plenty of rejoicing among pro-LGBTQ+ "Catholic" politicians, bishops, priests, and NGO activists, all of which was generously covered by the pro-LGBTQLMNOP+++ Fake News media. Thankfully, however, there has also been an outpouring of criticism by faithful Catholic cardinals, bishops, priests, theologians, scholars, and commentators. Naturally, these expressions of well-reasoned disapproval have received little to no media coverage or have been demeaned as rantings of "rigid" ideologues who are lacking in love and compassion. Below is a sampling of excerpts from statements critical of *Fiducia Supplicans*:

• "All Clergy residing and ministering in the Archdiocese of Nairobi are prohibited from blessing irregular relationships, unions, or same-sex couples…. Any form of blessing of same-sex unions and activities would go against God's word, the teachings of the Church, the African cultural traditions, the laws of our nations, and would be scandalous to the faithful." — Archbishop Philip Anyolo of Nairobi, Kenya

• "The fact that the document does not give permission for the 'marriage' of same-sex couples should not blind pastors and faithful to the great deception and the evil that resides in the very permission to bless couples in irregular situations and same-sex couples. Such a blessing directly and seriously contradicts Divine Revelation and the uninterrupted, bimillennial doctrine and practice of the Catholic Church. To bless couples in an

irregular situation and same-sex couples is a serious abuse of the most Holy Name of God, since this name is invoked upon an objectively sinful union of adultery or of homosexual activity…. With such blessings, the Catholic Church becomes, if not in theory, then in practice, a propagandist of the globalist and ungodly 'gender ideology.'" — Tomash Peta, metropolitan archbishop of the Archdiocese of Saint Mary in Astana, Kazakhstan, and Athanasius Schneider, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Saint Mary in Astana, Kazakhstan

• "Blessings for same sex unions of any kind are not permitted in Malawi." — Catholic Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi

• "The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith has become a Dicastery of confusion. This is precisely what the Argentinean Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández promotes. Not only the confusion of the faithful, but also of world opinion…. In conclusion: *Fiducia Supplicans* should not be obeyed. And it is perfectly correct to deny blessings to homosexual 'marriages,' and to marriages living in an irregular situation." — Archbishop Emeritus Hector Aguer, La Plata, Argentina

• "Truths are eternal and do not change with the zeitgeist. The other way around: popes and bishops bring nothing of their own but interpret the constant faith of the church on the line of tradition without breaking with it. It remains that a sinful practice and connection cannot be blessed because it is in the order of creation or the will of God and in such a case the blessing can neither be fruitfully administered nor received." — Bishop Emeritus Marian Eleganti of Chur, Switzerland

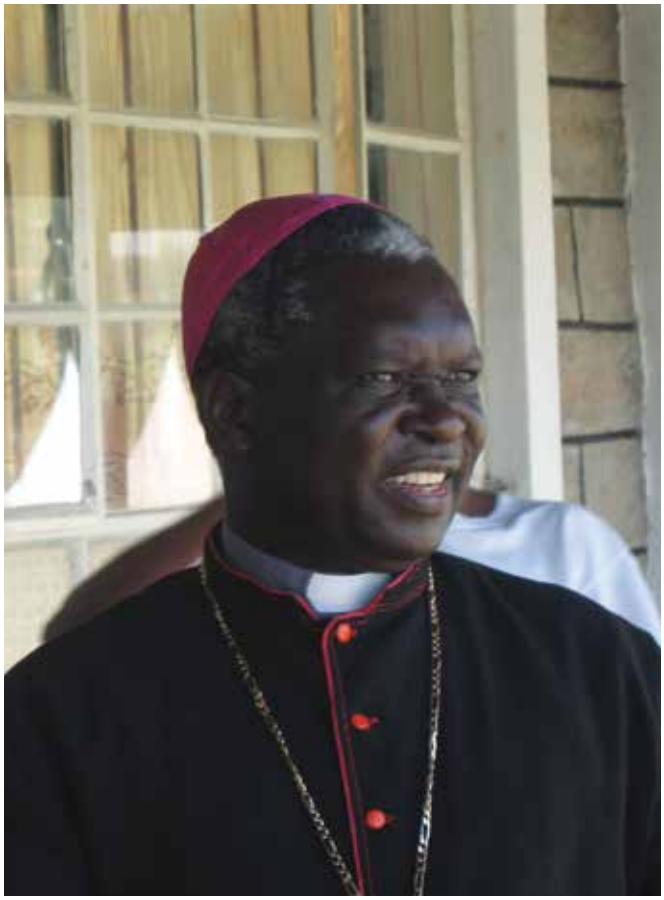
• "Notice that not only sinful persons are blessed here, but that by blessing the couple, it is the sinful relationship itself that is blessed. Now, God cannot send his grace upon a relationship that is directly opposed to him and cannot be ordered toward him…. The difficulty of blessing a union or couple is especially evident in the case of homosexuality. For in the Bible, a blessing has to do with the order that God has created and that he has declared to be good. This order is based on the sexual difference of male and female, called to be one flesh. Blessing a reality that is contrary to creation is not only impossible, it is blasphemy." — Cardinal Gerhard Müller, prefect emeritus of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith

• "Deliberate or persistent ambiguity — anything that fuels misunderstanding or seems to leave an opening for objectively sinful behavior — is not of God. And it inevitably results in damage to individual souls and to our common Church life…. The document [*Fiducia Supplicans*] is a doubleminded exercise in simultaneously affirming and undercutting Catholic teaching on the nature of blessings and their application to 'irregular' relationships…. Relationships that the Church has always seen as sinful are now often described as 'irregular.' This neuters the reality of morally defective behavior and leads to confusion about what we can and can't call 'sin.'" — Charles J. Chaput, archbishop emeritus of Philadelphia

• "Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that 'homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.' They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved…. We see no situation in which such a blessing of a couple could be properly and adequately distinguished from some level of approval. Thus, it would inevitably lead to scandal." — Confraternity of Catholic Clergy of the United Kingdom

• "Although it purports to avoid any confusion between the blessing of such illegitimate unions and that of a marriage between a man and a woman, this declaration avoids neither confusion nor scandal: not only does it teach that a minister of the Church can call down God's blessing on sinful unions, but by doing so, it actually reinforces these situations of sin…. All the convoluted language and sophistical dressing up of the document of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith cannot hide the elementary and obvious reality of these blessings: they will do nothing more than reinforce these unions in their intrinsically sinful situation, and encourage others to follow them." — Fr. Davide Pagliarani, superior general of the Society of Saint Pius X

• "There is the appearance of reason, but also a great deal of jargon, sophistry, and deceit…. To bless couples in irregular



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"Against God's Word": Archbishop Philip Anyolo of Nairobi, Kenya, prohibited implementation of *Fiducia Supplicans*, saying, "Any form of blessing of same-sex unions and activities would go against God's word, the teachings of the Church, the African cultural traditions, the laws of our nations, and would be scandalous to the faithful."

"Any misappropriation of the teaching office of the Church in a way that normalizes sin contributes to leading people further from Jesus' loving heart rather than closer to it and must be repudiated."

marriages or same-sex couples without giving the impression that the Church is ... validating their sexual activity is a charade. All those present at such blessings know, without a doubt, that such relationships are sexual in nature. No one is fooled. Actually, they are rejoicing that such sexual relations are being blessed. That's the point of these blessings. It is not their sexual abstinence being blessed, but their sexual indulgence…. Attempting immorally to exploit God's blessings makes a mockery of his divine goodness and love." — Fr. Thomas G. Weinandy, OFM, theologian and former member of the Vatican's International Theological Commission

• "A gay Christian can be blessed individually. But one cannot bless a gay relationship because the Church characterizes it as disordered, or sinful. This disordered character is affirmed, but nevertheless the declaration says that blessing such relationships is a possibility. In other words, blessing a sinful relationship is possible. God giving His blessing on a sin, it is a travesty!" — Robert Mutsaerts, auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of 's-Hertogenbosch in the Netherlands

• "We see no situation in which such a blessing of a couple could be properly and adequately distinguished from some level of approval of the irregular relationship, leading to the scandal of the faithful." — U.S. Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception

• "The first, and most serious, problem in *Fiducia Supplicans* (FS) is the choice of the word 'couple' to describe two people of the same sex who engage in sodomy within an ongoing publicly known, self-proclaimed committed relationship, such as a civil marriage…. There are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God's plan for marriage and family…. The use of the word couple is in fact a surrender to the heretical ideology that proclaims that homosexual couples are just as much couples as are heterosexual couples." — Fr. Gerald E. Murray, author, canon lawyer, pastor of Holy Family Church in New York City, commentator on EWTN

• "Sinful behavior and disordered inclinations can never be blessed or condoned. Even the appearance of endorsement of any moral evil must be avoided at all cost lest one infer that the one giving the 'blessing' is also a formal cooperator in evil, which is always forbidden." — Confraternity of Catholic Clergy (USA)

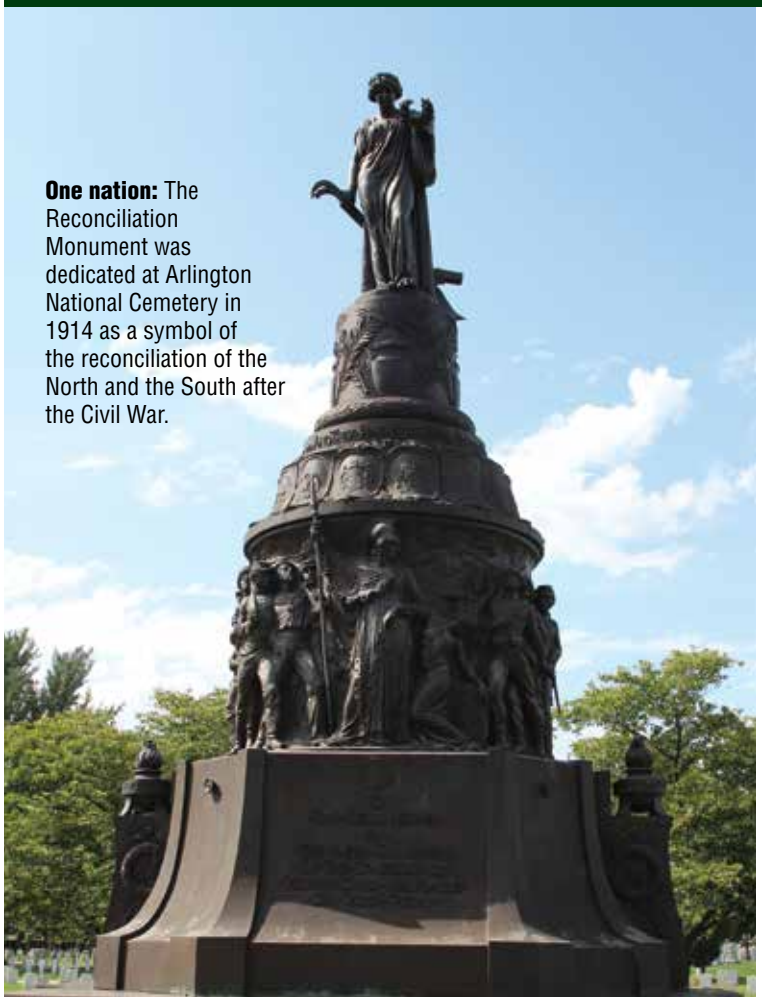
• "The ambiguity of this declaration — which lends itself to many interpretations & manipulations — is causing much perplexity among the faithful & I believe that … we need to speak out clearly on this issue in order to give clear guidance to our Christians." — Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo Besungu of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, president of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa & Madagascar (SECAM)

• "We really simply need to be a united voice saying, 'no,' we will not respond to this…. We will not incorporate this into the life of the Church because we simply must say 'no.' And it needs to be a united voice." — Joseph Strickland, bishop emeritus of the Diocese of Tyler, Texas

• "Any misappropriation of the teaching office of the Church in a way that normalizes sin contributes to leading people further from Jesus' loving heart rather than closer to it and must be repudiated…. There should be no ambiguity as regards this truth: the ministers of the Church have no power to bless sin. To do so would be a perversion of the very purpose of a blessing. Any person or persons willfully choosing to act contrary to the teachings of the Deposit of Faith may receive a blessing asking God for the grace of conversion to live in full accord with his revealed truths in Scripture and Tradition. Any sort of blessing that would give the semblance of condoning sin is not to be granted." — Bishop Peter M. Muhich, Rapid City, South Dakota, and Bishop Donald E. DeGrood, Sioux Falls, South Dakota ■

AP Images

"Impossible, blasphemy": Cardinal Gerhard Müller, former head of the office now run by Cardinal Fernández, said, "Notice … it is the sinful relationship itself that is blessed. Now, God cannot send His grace upon a relationship that is directly opposed to Him."



One nation: The Reconciliation Monument was dedicated at Arlington National Cemetery in 1914 as a symbol of the reconciliation of the North and the South after the Civil War.

Alex Newman/*The New American*

ARLINGTON MONUMENT REMOVAL

PART OF AMERICA'S "CULTURAL REVOLUTION"

The removal of the Reconciliation Monument at Arlington was part of an attempt to change America's culture by erasing its history.

by Steve Byas

The pre-Christmas removal of the "Reconciliation Monument" at Arlington National Cemetery is just the latest example of the "Cultural Revolution" sweeping America. It is a shocking example of the efforts of American Marxists and their dupes to 1) erase history and send it down the Orwellian "memory hole," 2) create division instead of unity in the country, and 3) advance a political agenda designed to promote their radical vision for the future.

It is a vision that predated Karl Marx, and is at least as old as the bloody French Revolution and the radical secret societies that brought it on. While the term "radical" is often used as a synonym for "extreme," it is more accurately used to designate efforts to destroy existing social institutions and replace them with a new social structure. The French radicals did all they could to eliminate the structures of French society. They changed the law code, they changed the calendar, and they even changed playing cards. But their particular target was religion, especially Christianity. They toppled monuments to the past, replacing statues of Christian saints in the cathedral of Notre Dame (one of the premier symbols of the Christian civilization they hated) with statues of "secular saints" such as Voltaire and Rousseau.

They had no desire for reconciliation with those they opposed.

Those who want to destroy monuments of our history are the ideological descendants of those French radicals and Marxist dogma. This is why they so strongly desired to tear down the monument at Arlington, as

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it is a powerful symbol of American reconciliation after our Civil War.

A Symbol of Reconciliation

The monument was erected at Arlington more than 100 years ago, surrounded by the graves of Confederate soldiers. Less than a week after the conclusion of the Spanish-American War in 1898, President William McKinley — a Union veteran — began a "Peace Jubilee" tour of the country. In Atlanta (which had been torched during Sherman's infamous "March to the Sea" during the Civil War), he told his Southern audience that he believed the time had come for the U.S. government to "share with you" the care of the graves of Confederate soldiers. "Sectional feeling no longer holds back the love we feel for each other. The old flag again waves over us in peace with new glories."

Many in the South took McKinley's remarks as a gesture of reconciliation. The United Confederate Veterans (UCV) had identified Confederate graves around the Washington, D.C., area and petitioned the government to have their remains moved to Arlington. McKinley and Congress strongly approved of the petition, noting that many Southerners had fought side-by-side with Northerners in the war with Spain (even a few old Confederate veterans served, with some even singing "Dixie" in the camps). In 1900, Congress appropriated $2,500 for the removal and reburial of Confederate soldiers. By 1902, 262 Confederates were buried in a specially designated section of the cemetery. Eventually, around 400 Confederate graves were included at Arlington.

On Confederate Memorial Day in 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt (who had served with some ex-Confederates during the Spanish-American War) sent a floral arrangement, a practice which every American president, including Barack Obama, followed until Joe Biden took office.

Ironically, President Biden, in his inaugural address on January 20, 2021, made "unity" the central theme of his brief remarks. He even said that his "whole soul" would be invested in "bringing America together — uniting our people — uniting our nation." He added, "I know speaking of unity can sound to some like a foolish fantasy. I know the forces that divide us are deep and they are real."

With the removal of a monument dedicated to the idea of unity and "uniting our nation," it appears that the "forces that divide us" include Biden himself and those on the Left who reject any efforts at reconciliation. Instead, with actions like this, what is being implemented is the Marxist concept of division through racial hatred, sectional hatred, hatred between the sexes, and any other grievances — real or imagined — that can tear the country apart. The left-wing Southern Poverty Law Center, for example, issued a statement in support of removing the monument as part of an effort to eradicate "white supremacy."

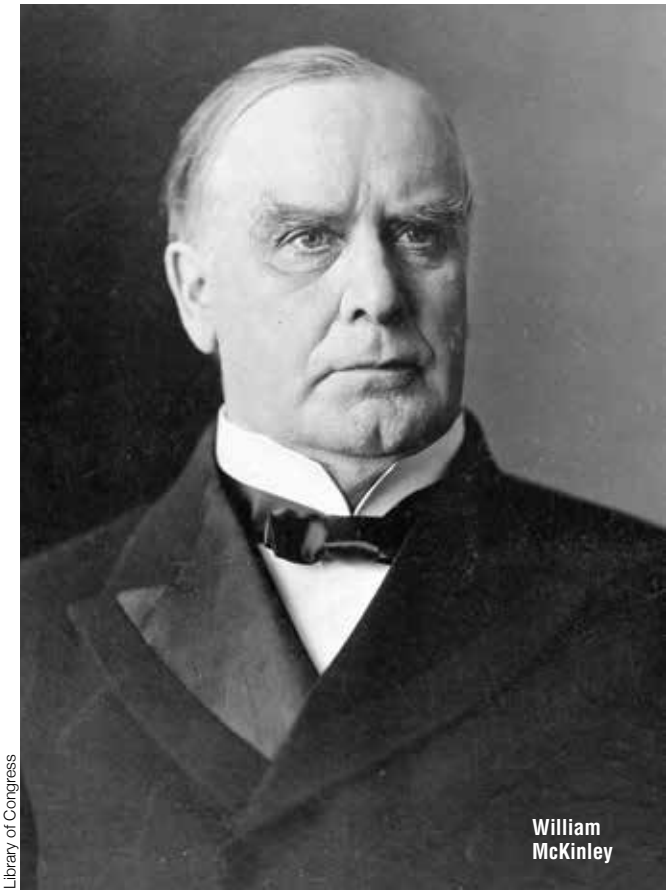
The monument removal was the result of a federal law requiring the Department of Defense to destroy anything Confederate associated with the U.S. military. In a recent online article, *The New American* noted that West Point had "erased the memory of [Confederate General] Robert E. Lee."

The Cemetery's Creation

This is especially ironic, considering that Arlington Cemetery is located on land essentially stolen from Lee by the federal government during the Civil War. The plantation and Arlington House were built by George Washington Parke Custis, the step-grandson of George Washington. (Washington and his wife, Martha, raised him as their own son after the death of Custis' father). Custis had one daughter, Mary Anna Randolph Custis, who married Robert E. Lee.

Upon the death of Lee's father-in-law in the late 1850s, Lee and his wife inherited the estate, which included slaves. Lee had written a letter to his wife from a military assignment in Texas a few years earlier, in which he expressed hope that God, in His providence, would choose to end slavery in America. When Lee inherited Arlington with its slaves, he also inherited enormous debts. The quickest way to eliminate the debts would have been to sell off the slaves, but he refused to do so. Instead, he preferred to pay off the debts and free the slaves, which he did just a few years later.

A few years ago, while this writer was vacationing in New Orleans, a bus tour guide pointed out a statue of Lee, which was soon to be torn down, commenting that Lee was just a "slave-owning dude." Obviously, this guide was either ignorant of history or duplicitous. Again, this is why history, with its monuments, is something that Marxists wish to control. As George Orwell said in his famous dystopian novel *1984*, "Those who control the past



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Reconciler-in-chief: President William McKinley was a leader in the reconciliation efforts between North and South, which eventually led to the monument at Arlington.

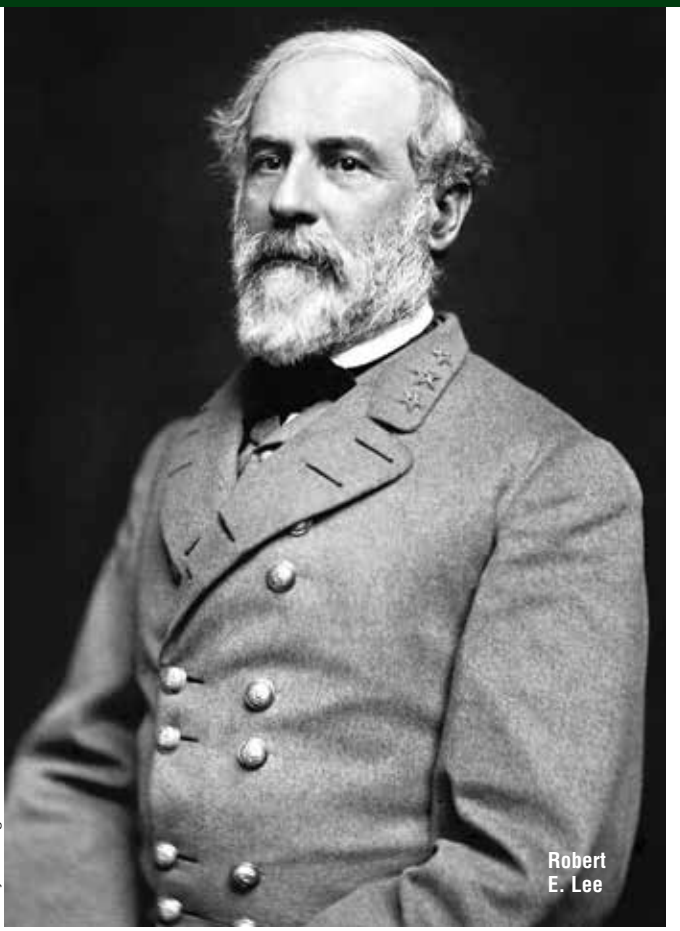
control the future, those who control the present control the past." Or as Lee himself remarked, "A nation which does not remember what it was yesterday does not know where it is today."

After the Civil War began, with Lee serving in the Confederate Army, his wife, Mary, left the plantation. It was soon occupied by Union troops, and much of her personal property was stolen. When she sent an agent to pay the property taxes, federal officers refused to allow this. They instead required that her husband appear in person to pay them — an obviously ridiculous and unconstitutional demand. Then, using the spurious argument that the taxes had not been paid, a tax sale was conducted and the federal government confiscated Arlington.

In 1882, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the property had been illegally confiscated without due process. The estate — which was already being used as a cemetery — was then returned to Robert and Mary's son, George Washington Custis Lee. He soon sold it back to the government for $150,000 (about $4 million today) at a signing ceremony, with then-Secretary of War Robert Todd Lincoln (son of President Abraham Lincoln) present.

With the passing of time, and the impressive Southern participation in the Spanish-American War, the bitterness of the Civil War had begun to fade, and President McKinley led the way in promoting reconciliation by allowing the reburial of Confederate veterans on land that had, at one time, been the home of the greatest Confederate general, Robert Edward Lee. Senator Joseph Roswell Hawley, who had been a major general in the Union Army during the war, introduced the bill to finance the reinterment of Confederate dead at Arlington.

At this point, the United Daughters of the Confederacy began raising funds to establish a memorial in the Confederate section, with the full support of Secretary of War William Howard Taft.



Library of Congress

Stolen land: Arlington Cemetery — the location of the Reconciliation Monument — was developed on land essentially stolen by federal troops from General Robert E. Lee during the Civil War. After the Lee family won the land back in court, they sold it to the U.S. government.

Moses Jacob Ezekiel, a Jewish Confederate veteran who later became a Christian minister, was commissioned to design the memorial, which he regarded as the most important work of his life. Ezekiel was the first Jewish graduate of the Virginia Military Institute. Speakers at the laying of the cornerstone on November 12, 1912, included three-time Democratic nominee for president William Jennings Bryan and James Tanner, a former commander of the Grand Army of the Republic (an organization of Union veterans). Tanner had lost both legs in the war, but believed the nation's sections needed the reconciliation the monument would symbolize.

Atop the 32-foot-tall pedestal is a bronzed female figure crowned with olive leaves (symbols of peace), representing the American South. She holds in her left hand a laurel wreath, and in her right a pruning hook resting on a plow. Beneath her feet is a verse of Scripture from Isaiah 2:4, which declared that when the Messiah came, weapons of war would be converted into tools of peace. The statue rests on a pedestal with four cinerary urns, representing the four years of the war. It is supported by a frieze with 14 shields, which represent the 11 Confederate states and the border states of Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri (which provided thousands of Confederate soldiers). Additionally, 32 life-sized figures depict mythical gods alongside Confederate soldiers and civilians.

Critics contend that the monument represents a nostalgic, mythologized version of the Confederacy. Their argument is partially based on the inclusion of two black Southerners portrayed on the monument. One is a black woman holding the infant child of a white officer, while the other is a black man with his master, going off to war. Critics argue that this gives a "sanitized" view of slavery. Considering that the monument was a *reconciliation* monument, their inclusion could have just as well been intended to portray them in a positive light. (It is likely that had no blacks been included in the monument, *that* would have elicited criticism.)

Some blacks did aid the Confederate cause, although not *officially* as soldiers. Most served as cooks, teamsters, and laborers, but many engaged in battle as well. To a Union soldier, it would make little difference if he were shot by an "official" Confederate soldier, or an unofficial black Confederate.

This effort to destroy the past is similar to the Cultural Revolution in Communist China under Mao, in which the "Four Olds"— old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits — were attacked. And reconciliation — an "old idea" based on our Christian culture — is not a virtue of American Marxists, either. ■

Restoring an Invaluable Memory

Linda Swartz of Champaign, Illinois, thought a voice-recording of her late mother was lost forever until an electrician with a heart of gold intervened.

Since she was a child, Swartz had owned a cherished copy of the popular children's story *Frosty the Snowman*, which included a voice-recording of her mother reading the words of the story, but after years of use, corrosion took hold of the book's circuitry and the recording no longer worked. She continued to hold on to the book for sentiment, but after her mother passed in 2020, Swartz was especially saddened by the notion that the book could no longer play her mother's voice.

Electrician Lars Robins had been called to Swartz' home just before Christmas to take care of an electrical problem when he stumbled upon the book. Swartz told him the story of the book, and Robins, a former teacher, felt compelled to help.

"Helping people is the heart of what we do, so being able to help somebody in that kind of specific way, those opportunities don't come around too often but when they do you kind of jump on them," he explained.

Robins was able to clean the corrosion off the book's circuitry and got the recording to work again.

Swartz told WCIA News that she was shocked he was able to fix the recording.

"This is pretty special, brings tears to your eyes when you hear your parent's voice again," she said.

Replaced Roof

A generous company and kindly neighbor in Marietta, Georgia, came together in a big way for a struggling mother with a leaky roof.

Amy Koonce, a single mother of two, had been dealing with a very leaky roof for the last few years, Fox 5 reported, but she simply did not have the $10,000 needed to fix it.

"I was worried about it, didn't expect to ever get it done because it's a very expensive project," Koonce said.

Serendipitously, Transformation Roofing & Home Services posted on its Facebook page on November 28 that it was going to give away a free roof to a family in need.

"If you are reading this and this isn't something you may need, we would like to ask you to think about someone that may need it and pass it along to them as this could change their holiday season," the post read.

Koonce's neighbor, Alexa Waters, jumped at the opportunity to nominate the Koonce family for the roof, and they were selected to be the lucky recipients of the free roof.

Just after Christmas, the roofing company replaced Koonce's entire roof, noting that her old roof was in dire need, suffering from numerous leaks, rotted decking, and missing shingles.

"We've had a really good year, we're blessed to have that good year, but this is where the real impact happens, being able to give back like this. So, it's just a great feeling," owner Tyler Streetman told Fox 5.

For Koonce, the new roof takes a load off her mind.

"I have a type one diabetic 8-year-old daughter, and a 16-year-old son," she explained. "We've had a lot of ups and downs, and this is a good moment."

Waters is happy she could help her neighbor.

"Merrily" Indeed

Thanks to some generous theatergoers in New York City, server Clair Rachel Howell was able to fulfill her dream of seeing *Merrily We Roll Along* on Broadway.

Howell was serving a table at a restaurant in New York City's theater district when the patrons at the table mentioned they were headed to see *Merrily We Roll Along*, a show Howell said she had wanted to see but couldn't afford because the ticket prices were too high.

When the diners finished their meal and paid their bill, Howell was astonished to see a $500 tip and a note attached to the bill, written by the gentleman who paid.

"Go see *Merrily*! Sit in the orchestra," it read.

Howell posted about the strangers' kindness on Instagram and shared photos of her amazing night at *Merrily We Roll Along*, expressing her deepest gratitude for the kind, anonymous patron who made it possible.

Taking a Knee for an Actual Good Cause

When the Michigan Wolverines took to the field before their playoff game against the Alabama Crimson Tide on January 1, they had no qualms about showcasing their spirituality. The players gathered in a large circle and knelt in prayer before the game. What's more, following their 27-20 overtime Rose Bowl victory over Alabama, the players gave all the credit to God in their post-game press conference.

Michigan linebacker Junior Colson opened his comments by giving "all glory to God." His sentiments were echoed by quarterback J.J. McCarthy, who bowed his head and pointed heavenward.

Later, Michigan running back Donovan Edwards talked about his faith in an interview posted to YouTube by WolverinesWire.

"Before I committed to Michigan, I heard a voice say 'Do not worry. Everything will be alright.' And I figured that was God talking to me," he said.

Edwards detailed how his faith in God was unwavering, in good times and in bad.

"It's not difficult for me to praise God and, you know, to give Him glory because He's always given me — He's always been there for me, you know when everything was high, so I'd be doing a disgrace to God if I wasn't praising Him when everything was low," Edwards said.

It's refreshing to see college students openly expressing their faith, particularly when college campuses have become hotbeds for atheism and secular worldviews. Hopefully these young men will be able to retain their values and spirituality if and when they enter the world of professional sports. ■

— Raven Clabough

Propaganda Playbook for War

Today's elites are beating the drums for war in Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia, but this propaganda is nothing new.

Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain

Not our war: The First World War, which began in 1914, did not directly involve the United States until 1917, when Congress agreed to a declaration of war on Germany and Austria. Propaganda led much of the American public to believe the war in Europe should be joined by U.S. troops.

by Steve Byas

In 1935, retired U.S. Marine Corps Major General Smedley Butler published a short book based on a speech he had been delivering in recent years. The book by the two-time Medal of Honor award winner was titled *War Is a Racket*.

General Butler explained, "War is a racket. It has always been. It is possibly the oldest, easily the most profitable, surely the most vicious." While Butler was naturally most concerned with American involvement in war, he noted, "It is the only one international in scope." This "racket," Butler continued, "is best described, I believe, as something that is not what it seems to the majority of the people. Only a small 'inside' group knows what it is about. It is conducted for the benefit of the very few at the expense of the very many."

How the general population is persuaded to support something — a war against their own self-interest — is the result of certain techniques of persuasion that were the subject of the 1939 book *Propaganda for War: The Campaign against American Neutrality, 1914-1917* by University of Oklahoma history Professor H.C. Peterson. This book details how Americans were finally dragged into the First World War despite there being no apparent threat to the United States. Of course, this "playbook" was used prior to WWI to get America involved in the Spanish-American War of 1898, principally by the "yellow press" newspapers of William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, but at least that war involved an island, Cuba, less than 100 miles from our shores. The war in Europe, on the other hand, was thousands of miles away and fought by European nations that had been fighting each other for centuries. While the wars between Great Britain and France in the 17th and 18th centuries did have a rather strong impact on the Colonies of the British Empire, it is difficult to imagine just how the outcome of WWI would make much difference to the United States.

The "propaganda playbook" documented by Professor Peterson is not just an academic exercise of some interest in and of itself. We can take his analysis of how America went to war in 1917 and apply it to multiple examples of how this playbook has been used in the past century, and is still being used today. As is often the case in a football game, if a play continues to gain yardage, the coach will keep calling the play. Only when the play becomes ineffective is there any need to do something else. In the case of the propaganda used in WWI, these methods still work today, and those who desire U.S. involvement in foreign wars keep using them.

British War Propaganda

"The British campaign to induce the United States to come to their assistance affected every phase of American life; it was propaganda in its broadest meaning," Peterson wrote. "News, money, and political pressure each played its part and the battle itself was fought not only in London, New York, and D.C. but also in American classrooms and pulpits, factories and offices."

The British campaign to directly involve the United States in the European war began in the first few days of the war, with attempts to win the sympathy of the general public in America. Fortunately for the British, many Americans already believed they and the British were members of the same cultural sphere, and, as Peterson explained, "The language factor here played a tremendously important part."

Walter Mills, a prominent newspaper publisher, wrote in his book *Road to War*, "For years, the American public had received its day-by-day picture of Europe through a distinctly British perspective." But the British took no chances on German propaganda negating any of the natural advantages the British had. The day after the British declared war on Germany, the

British cut the transatlantic cable between Germany and America. They set up "Wellington House" for the purpose of censoring war news inside Britain, and this was the "news" that Americans generally received.

British propaganda services even held a conference in the office of financier J.P. Morgan (a financial agent in the United States for British bankers) to devise policies for "coloring the American press." At the time, Americans received almost all of their news from newspapers, and the British targeted the leading U.S. newspapers — most of which were based in New York — for their propaganda. Smaller newspapers would then transmit this propaganda on to their own readers. Some of these major newspapers, such as *The New York Times*, are still important tools for shaping American views on foreign conflicts, but radio, television, and the internet have ended their monopoly. However, a near-monopoly of thought still exists in the mass media for supporting American involvement in foreign wars.

Library of Congress

Pure propaganda: U.S. war propaganda during WWI depicted Germans as violent invaders coming to rape and pillage America. Such nonsense was used to whip people into a frenzy against a nation that was not really an enemy.

The presidential administration of Democrat Woodrow Wilson was, after Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan's resignation in 1915, uniformly in favor of the British, but remained officially "neutral." Unfortunately for the cause of peace, leading Republicans, such as Wilson's fellow "progressive" Teddy Roosevelt, were for the most part even more bellicose in their support for direct American involvement. In 1914-1917 — as is the case today — while Democrats and Republicans disagreed on many public issues, Americans who wanted to stay out of foreign military entanglements usually found themselves in the minority, and were often vilified for not agreeing to "go along" with the push for war.

Another group courted by the British were American industrialists and financiers, who would stand to make tremendous sums of money off the war, whether the United States got directly involved in the conflict in Europe or simply supplied the Allied forces with whatever they needed. For example, the Navy League was formed by bankers J.P. Morgan, Thomas Lamont, and Frank Vanderlip, as well as Elbert Gary (U.S. Steel), Harry Payne Whitney (Guaranty Trust), S.H. Pell (International Nickel), Cornelius Vanderbilt (railroad tycoon), Ogden Mills (financier), and Percy Rockefeller (financier), all of whom opposed American neutrality.

Once propaganda is successful in changing a person's mind, Peterson noted, that person often becomes an ardent propagandist himself. This was the case in the United States leading up to the 1917 declaration of war, and it is true today, as we often hear average Americans simply parroting what they have heard (over and over) about why the war between Ukraine and Russia should be of great interest to us.

The British knew that, before Americans could be persuaded that the war in Europe was important to them, they needed to portray the fight as between the "good" British and the "bad" Germans. To do this, Peterson wrote, "The British captured the American flag and waved it in front of themselves." Any criticism of the British by an American was eventually viewed as unpatriotic, and any attempt to present a more balanced view of the conflict was considered disloyal — even treasonous — to America. As Peterson put it, "Even the most timid isolationists were accused of being pro-German."

For example, Robert Goldstein, the German-Jewish man who produced *The Spirit of '76*, a movie about the American Revolution, was considered a traitor by millions of Americans and was jailed for "sedition," as the movie made our British allies look bad. On the other hand, anything German had to be demonized. Kaiser Wilhelm II made a convenient villain, and even his upturned mustache was used as a symbol of militarism.

Demonizing the Enemy

But the kaiser was just the leader. The whole German nation was often portrayed as militaristic and bent on world domination. J.P. Morgan later testified before the U.S. Senate's Nye Committee (investigating the financial and banking interests behind U.S. involvement in WWI), "The whole German nation had started out ... with the cry of world domination." Peterson wrote, "Intellectually, the establishment of belief in German war guilt was a difficult task. However, with the appeal being made to emotion rather than intellect fewer difficulties were presented."

This necessitated "the omission of the consideration of certain actions by Serbia, Russia, France, and England. For instance, the responsibility of the Serbian government for the tragedy at Sarajevo was ignored.… Russian mobilization was discounted.… French encouragement of Russian pugnacity was not revealed." Morgan even argued that "the war was

begun by Germany by the unexpected and criminal invasion of Belgium."

Certainly, the allegations of mass atrocities by the Germans in Belgium by British propaganda artists were very effective. Germans were supposedly guilty of routinely killing babies in Belgium, usually with their bayonets, singing all the while. There were even some stories that German soldiers ate babies in Belgium. Women were raped, and some had their breasts cut off. Peterson commented that most of these stories were "purely fictitious."

The invasion of neutral Belgium by the Germans was cited by the British as their reason for entering the war on the side of France, but U.S. Ambassador to Britain Walter Hines Page later admitted that the British were going to enter the war anyway. Besides that, the British and the French invaded neutral Greece. The king of Greece said, "It is the merest cant for Great Britain and France to talk about the violation of the neutrality of Belgium and Luxembourg, after what they themselves have done, and are doing here.… Just look at the list of Greek territories already occupied by Allied troops.… They plead military necessity. It was under constraint of military necessity that Germany invaded Belgium and occupied Luxembourg."

If the invasion of Belgium was the supposed reason the British declared war on Germany, American entry into the war has been attributed to the resumption of "unrestricted submarine warfare" by the Germans, which the Germans had suspended in 1915 to avoid war with the United States after the sinking of the British passenger liner *Lusitania.*

Since the days of Queen Elizabeth and the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, England had been considered the world's preeminent sea power. Germany simply could not compete with the surface navy of the British Empire. Britain used this advantage on the seas to blockade Germany, stopping the Germans from importing not only munitions, but also food and medicine. It is estimated that more than three-quarters of a million Germans died as a

The playbook of the War Party has not changed since Peterson wrote his book *Propaganda for War*. After all, why should it? As the coach who is marching down the field running the ball would think, just keep doing it, don't pass, and we will keep scoring.

Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain

Fake news: The U.S. government claimed that North Vietnamese forces attacked the destroyers USS *Maddox* (shown here) and USS *Turner Joy* in the Gulf of Tonkin on August 4, 1964, prompting the U.S. war against North Vietnam. This attack was later shown to have never happened.

AP Images

Take him out: Saddam Hussein was certainly a bad guy, but there are lots of bad guys ruling various nations of the world. A steady drumbeat of propaganda about "weapons of mass destruction" convinced Americans that it was imperative that he be driven from power, even at the cost of American lives and treasure.

result of the British blockade, either as a result of malnutrition and even outright starvation, or from a series of epidemics including scarlet fever, diphtheria, and typhus. As Winston Churchill, then the British first lord of the admiralty, bluntly explained, the blockade's purpose was to "starve the whole population — men, women, and children, old and young, wounded and sound — into submission." To mitigate this disadvantage, the Germans turned to submarines, which could use torpedoes to sink British surface ships and perhaps begin to break the blockade.

But British propaganda efforts were able to create the impression that submarine warfare was somehow barbaric (as though the deliberate starving of German women and children was not). After all, the submarines could sink ships that had no chance to even surrender — not that they would have surrendered, as British captains were ordered to ram into any German U-boat they saw and sink it. Even merchant ships were directed to do the same. The British were prepared to sink any ship attempting to bring anything into Germany, even food or medicine, but if the Germans dared to sink ships attempting to bring weapons into Britain, the British used that as an example of German barbarity.

The Sinking of the *Lusitania*

The RMS *Lusitania* was a British passenger liner that included on its passenger list many non-British, including scores of Americans making their way across the Atlantic Ocean. It also included munitions. Six million rounds of small-arms ammunition and 1,250 cases of shrapnel shells were on board. The Germans ran ads in American newspapers on May 1, 1915, warning that any American who traveled on a British ship did so at his own risk. Yet, President Wilson insisted that Germany would be held responsible if any Americans died as a result of German submarines sinking British ships. He took the position that American citizens had a right to travel on British ships. Patrick Buchanan noted in his book *A Republic, Not an Empire*, "There was no major peril to American citizens from submarines, if they traveled on American ships."

Secretary of State Bryan was exasperated. "Why be shocked by the drowning of a few people, if there is to be no objection to starving a nation?"

The Germans did sink the *Lusitania*, as they had warned they would, and 128 Americans died as a result. For a while, it appeared that Wilson might ask for a declaration of war against Germany, but the Germans apologized and promised to suspend unrestricted submarine warfare. In contrast, Bryan argued that Americans who opted to travel on belligerent ships were being "selfish," because not only were they putting their own lives in danger, but they were putting their fellow Americans at risk of involvement in the Great War. Bryan decided to resign rather than continue in a presidential administration that was holding the Germans to a higher standard than the British. He feared that this lack of neutrality would drag Americans into a war they had little reason to be involved in.

Rather than side with Bryan against Wilson's policies, Theodore Roosevelt, the unofficial leader of the Republican Party, condemned Bryan, calling him "contemptible." The *New York World* chimed in, arguing that Bryan had "betrayed" Wilson. The *Atlanta Constitution* dismissed him as a "public nuisance," adding that they would no longer print any of Bryan's anti-war statements.

This is not much different from today, with the major media largely supportive of U.S. involvement against the latest "bad guys," bombing them, invading them, or at least undermining them with aid to their enemies. As is the case with the politicians, the media — whether it be Fox News or MSNBC — tend to repeat the war propaganda of the party in power.

The sinking of the *Lusitania* did not immediately lead to U.S. entry into the war, but it was resurrected as an excuse to go to war in early 1917 when the Germans gambled that they had to again resort to unrestricted submarine warfare, even at the risk of war with the United States. In 1937, the sinking of the U.S. gunboat *Panay* on the Yangtze River in China by a Japanese bomber almost resulted in war. The *Panay* was there to protect a Standard Oil tanker. Of course, there was also the 1964 incident in the Gulf of Tonkin,

in which North Vietnamese were alleged to have attacked a couple of U.S. Navy destroyers in the gulf off the coast of Vietnam. The supposed attack, which actually never happened, led to the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and the deployment of U.S. conventional forces to South Vietnam.

As is the case with the politicians, the media — whether it be Fox News or MSNBC — tend to repeat the war propaganda of the party in power.

The Propaganda Playbook Continues Today

More recent examples of propaganda that led Americans to support foreign wars include the months of allegations in late 2002-early 2003 that Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein had used chemical weapons against his own people, had "rape-rooms," and was working on weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), with the implication these would eventually be used on America. After the events of September 11, 2001, there were suggestions made, without evidence, that Hussein had something to do with the downing of the World Trade Center in New York City and the attack on the Pentagon. This was so widely believed that many Americans signed up in the armed forces so they could retaliate against the Iraqi strongman.

Hussein was even compared to Adolf Hitler, a common propaganda strategy to villainize an opponent. To the War Party, it is always 1938, and every adversary is Hitler. When in a recent church class I mentioned Hitler and Joseph Stalin as examples of individuals often thought of as "great sinners," one of the women in the class added, "and Putin." When I said that Putin is a bad guy but he is not Hitler, the woman cocked her head in obvious disbelief. I tried to put it into perspective: "Putin has not killed millions of people, like Hitler did with the Jews (and others) in the Holocaust." To this, she responded, "Not that we know of."

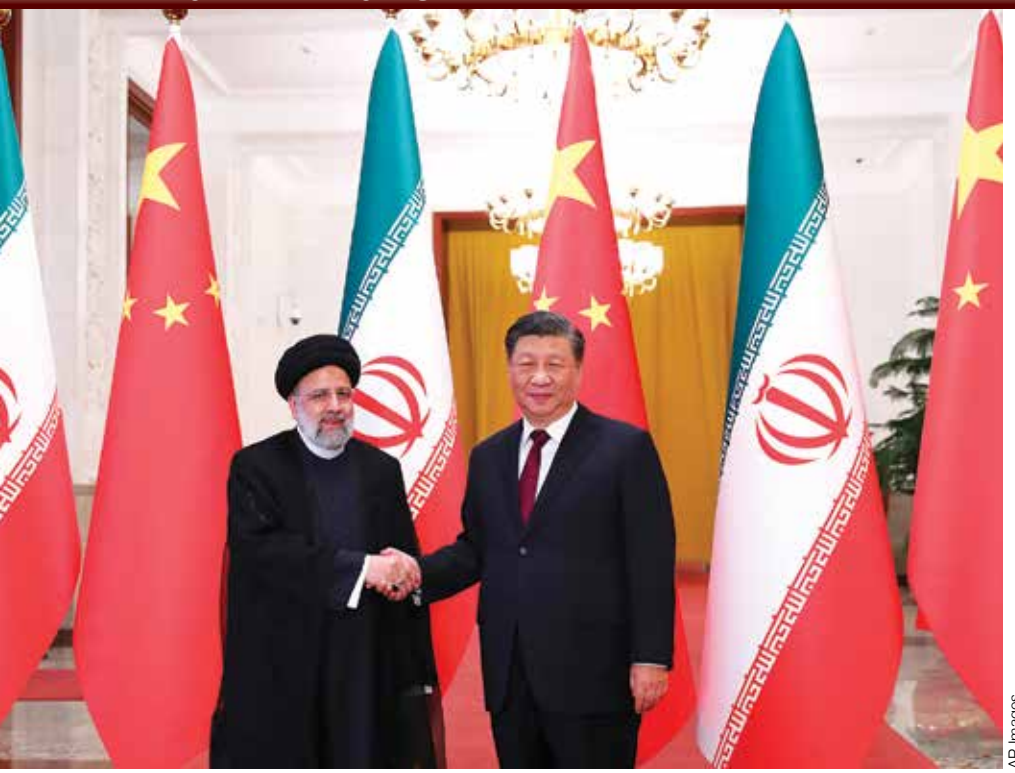
AP Images

Bad guy: Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine has led to a propaganda effort to frame him as the new Adolf Hitler (as was done with Saddam Hussein before). Since Russia is bad, Ukraine must be good. But the truth is, both governments are bad.

Make no mistake; Putin *is* a bad guy, and he did invade Ukraine, but there are many bad guys in the world today, and we (fortunately) do not involve ourselves in every territorial dispute around the world. Amazingly, many of the same propagandists who insist that Putin is the next Hitler have not always been so opposed to Russian strongmen. In fact, during the Cold War, many in the media and on the left side of the political spectrum tended to portray Soviet dictators as being not all that bad. For example, when former KGB chief Yuri Andropov emerged as the top man in the Soviet Union in 1983, he was greeted with accolades by leftists in America. After all, they opined, he can speak English, he likes jazz music, and he drinks Scotch instead of vodka.

This praise of Russian leaders continued with Putin himself, at least until fairly recently — and it was bipartisan, just as the current demonization of Putin is bipartisan. President George W. Bush said of Putin, "I looked the man in the eye. I found him very straightforward and trustworthy.… I was able to get a sense of his soul." Then-Senator Joe Biden said he was "amazed" that Putin was "throwing his lot with the West." Then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton even presented Putin's foreign minister with a red "reset button" to symbolize improved relations, as the Obama administration was working to get Putin's Russia into the World Trade Organization.

But now these accolades are a distant memory. In an effort to smear Donald Trump during the 2016 presidential campaign, Hillary Clinton alleged that Putin was trying to interfere in the election to help Trump and that Trump was "Putin's puppet." Both Democrats and Republicans have largely fallen in line with this anti-Putin narrative in the context of the Ukraine-Russia War. As was the case before both world wars, Ukraine's war against Russia is seen as somehow being *our* war.



AP Images

More bad guys: According to Western leaders and news outlets, China and Iran are part of a global "Axis of Evil," along with Russia and North Korea. Calls for war with Iran are becoming louder, and talk of war with China over Taiwan is gaining traction.

And, since it is *our* war, to be opposed to getting more deeply involved in that war is seen as somehow unpatriotic and pro-Putin, just as being opposed to entering WWI was seen as unpatriotic and pro-German. One does not have to be a conservative Republican to be branded as a traitor, either. When former Representative Tulsi Gabbard (D-Hawaii) opposed U.S. involvement in the war in Ukraine, Hillary Clinton accused her of being a "Russian asset" who was being "groomed" by Putin. "She's the favorite of the Russians," Clinton said. Gabbard responded, calling Clinton "the queen of warmongers."

The New York Times and CNN have also promoted the idea that Gabbard is a Russian asset.

Americans have been treated to a steady stream of atrocity stories blamed on Russian troops, in similar fashion to the demonization of the Spanish in 1898, Germans in 1917, and Iraqis in 2003. In the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq War, the *Chicago Tribune* published a story describing Hussein's "anti-inflation" efforts in 1992, in which he "rounded up, tried and executed 42 food merchants in one day."

According to Wikipedia, "Since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Russian military and authorities have committed multiple war crimes," including the massacre of civilians, "torture and rape of women and children, torture and mutilation of Ukrainian prisoners of war, and indiscriminate attacks in densely populated areas." Additionally, according to Wikipedia and the mainstream media, Russians have bombed houses, hospitals, schools, historic buildings, and churches.

All of this could very well be true, but any mention of war crimes by *Ukrainian* actors opens one up to accusations of being "pro-Putin." But among the techniques used by Ukrainian armed forces are waterboarding and strangling. Ukrainians have been known to send prisoners into minefields. Of course, little is said of this in most of the media or among American politicians, so most Americans are not aware that Ukrainians are also guilty of atrocities.

According to an article by the libertarian Mises Institute, "This is because numerous parties — in both governments and the media outlets themselves — are working hard to bend the American public's perception of the war to their benefit." For example, Western photojournalists asked a group of Ukrainian soldiers to remove from their uniforms patches using "Nazi" symbolism before they did a photoshoot. As Mises author Connor O'Keeffe said, "By doing so, these journalists crossed the line from documenting their subjects to staging them."

And, as the chosen "enemy" in all of these scenarios is often designated as "Hitler," in the case of the war between Ukraine and Russia, Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelensky is predictably cast as "Churchill." This "morality play" can lead to harsh retaliation against anyone who gets in the way of such propaganda. As Professor Peterson wrote in his book, this was quite common in the propaganda efforts to get the United States into WWI. But one does not have to be pro-Kaiser Wilhelm or pro-Putin to stay out of a war, just pro-America.

In an article for *The American Conservative* about the propaganda campaign of the pro-Ukraine crowd, author Ted Galen Carpenter wrote, "The Ukraine lobby is the latest example of a foreign government and its American supporters having a dangerous outsize impact on U.S. policy.… Activists have attempted to harass and silence opponents of the fawning U.S. support for Zelensky's government," thus "chilling debate regarding policy" toward Ukraine.

Carpenter has also written for the libertarian Cato Institute, and noted that they received a letter, signed by several major donors to the think tank, urging Cato to support sanctions on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine. Several of Carpenter's articles critical of the repressive domestic policies of the Ukrainian government were soon removed from the Cato website.

The playbook of the War Party has not changed since Peterson wrote his book *Propaganda for War*. After all, why should it? As the coach who is marching down the field running the ball would think, just keep doing it, don't pass, and we will keep scoring.

The internationalist warmonger elites will continue getting us into endless wars as long as their propaganda playbook keeps working. ■

Mother Evicted for Using a Gun to Stop a Burglar

Fox4, the Fox affiliate in Dallas-Fort Worth, reported on December 22 about a wild incident in Fort Worth involving a single mother living in federally subsidized housing who was evicted for using a handgun to avert a burglary. Twenty-five-year-old Aleah Wallace, a mother of four, had had her federally subsidized rental unit burglarized multiple times when she wasn't home. Fed up, she purchased a handgun for self-defense. Someone then tried breaking in around 1:15 a.m. on December 14, while Wallace and her kids were home. Wallace called the police, who came to the apartment but did not find the burglar.

Less than two hours later, someone once again tried entering her apartment, through the daughter's bedroom window. Wallace immediately grabbed her handgun and fired through the window, hitting the suspect and mortally wounding him. Police were called back to the apartment and found the deceased suspect at the scene. Law enforcement later determined that the suspect was only 14 years old. Wallace explained she wasn't aware of the suspect's age at the time of the shooting, only that she was in fear for both her life and the lives of her children. In an interview with Fox4, she explained, "I had to think about my babies…. I didn't know that he was 14 when he was on the other side of that window. All I knew was that somebody could come in here and hurt me or my kids."

If the shooting had occurred within the apartment, it would be an open-and-shut case of justifiable homicide due to the state's castle doctrine, but since the shooting occurred while the suspect was standing outside the apartment, it has been referred to a grand jury. Wallace will likely escape prosecution, though, due to Texas' strong "stand-your-ground" self-defense laws.

As if all of this chaos wasn't enough, Wallace was then informed by her property manager that she was being evicted for possessing a firearm. Wallace told Fox4 that "the apartments called and told me that I was not supposed to have a gun at all, even though I kept calling them and telling them somebody was breaking in. They told me I could not have a gun, and I have 30 days to vacate…. I feel like I'm back at square one. I was there for six years, and now I don't know what to do."

All is not lost, though, as Wallace's story went viral and Republican lawmakers in the state are rushing to her defense. State Representative Carrie Isaac is checking in on what options there are with the state's housing authority. Isaac told Fox4, "It made me very angry…. No one should be denied their Second Amendment right just because they live in public housing. It's unconstitutional." She added, "I have been talking with my [legislative] colleagues. I want Ms. Wallace to know she has several legislators in Texas pulling for her…. And if we need to strengthen our Second Amendment laws, specifically regarding public housing, we will do that. I don't believe we have to. I believe this is unconstitutional." Isaac also criticized the property managers for evicting Wallace: "They are creating an unsafe environment by taking away the Second Amendment right of law-abiding citizens…. And I want her to know that we are fighting for her, pulling for her. And we'll do everything we can to make sure that she has a roof over her head and that they are not throwing her out on the street."

Besides the politicians fighting on Wallace's behalf, attorneys who specialize in fighting evictions are lining up to provide pro bono services. Mark Melton, the founder of the Dallas Eviction Advocacy Center, believes that her eviction might actually be easy to fight. He told Fox4 that "historically there is no federal law regarding whether public housing facilities can prohibit or ban guns by the residents…. It's always been somewhat optional based on state law." Melton further explained that there is a 2019 Texas statute that makes it illegal for landlords to prohibit residents from lawfully possessing a gun on their property. He elaborated that "[if] the landlord in this case says we're going to evict you simply because you possessed a weapon inside your apartment, that's illegal and an unenforceable contract term. They cannot evict her in Texas for that…. You can contract to do a lot of different things, in Texas especially. However, the gun ban issue is obviously not going to fly here. There's also some Fifth [Circuit] Court of Appeals cases of late in fact that say that self-defense from an unprovoked attack is not, under any circumstances, a breach of a lease."

Overcoming a Disability

In another item out of Texas, Fox7 in Austin reported on November 19 an uplifting story in which an Austin man with no arms succeeded in getting licensed to carry a gun. Central Texas Gun Works owner Michael Cargill posted the story on social media, where he wrote, "It brought me to tears, I wanted to cry because I was happy that I was able to help this young man…. He wanted to be able to protect himself." In the video that Cargill posted to social media, the disabled student can be seen loading a gun with his feet and then shooting at targets. Cargill explained how he worked with the young man on finding workarounds to make sure he knew how to handle a firearm safely and effectively. "We had to work with what toe he was going to use to actually pull on the trigger and how he was going to hold the gun, nice and steady, all while looking at your sight … your front sight and your rear sight…. He didn't just barely pass, he passed with flying colors and was an outstanding student…. It was a piece of cake, he fired from the 3-yard line, the 7-yard line and the 15-yard line, the only thing I did for him that was different is I allowed him to sit on a chair." Cargill added that he hopes this young man's inspiring story encourages others to take his course. "This young man had no arms, no hands, and he was able to actually shoot and pass and do exceptionally well at the gun range." ■

— Patrick Krey

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THE
REVIEW

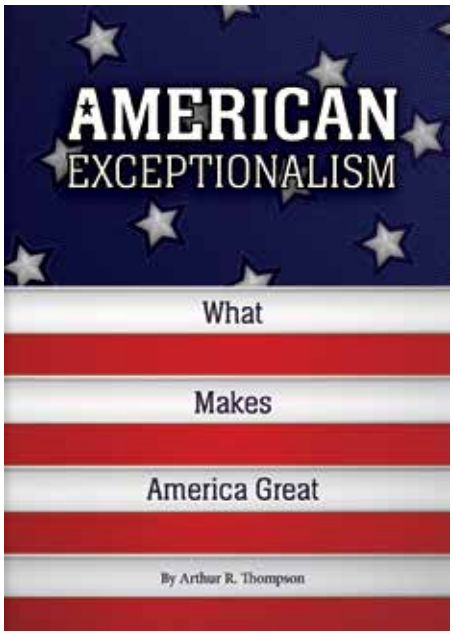
American Exceptionalism Is the World's Hope

by Steve Byas

***American Exceptionalism: What Makes America Great*,** by Arthur R. Thompson, Appleton, Wisconsin: Western Islands, 2023, 132 pages, hardcover and paperback. (To order, see inside front cover.)

Although the term "American Exceptionalism" is used across the political spectrum, it is often misunderstood — even by politicians and political commentators who use the term favorably. One might recall that then-President Barack Obama answered a question about American Exceptionalism by noting that other countries, such as Greece, consider themselves "exceptional" as well. This, of course, implies that there is nothing particularly exceptional about America.

In *American Exceptionalism: What Makes America Great*, former John Birch Society CEO Arthur R. Thompson not only advocates for American Exceptionalism, but explains what it is and why it is so important, not only



for citizens of the United States, but for the rest of the world. In fact, Thompson argues that the principal reason that the entire world has not already become completely communist is because of American Exceptionalism.

Thompson also explains what American Exceptionalism is *not*. Many of the detractors of the term consider it arrogant, claiming that it asserts there is something special, or "exceptional," about the American *people.* But, as he makes clear, American Exceptionalism has nothing to do with the people of the United States, as America is composed of people of diverse ethnic and national backgrounds.

American Exceptionalism, he asserts, is not about the people, but rather about the *system of government*, and he argues that this is what "sets us apart as a civilization." The Founders "had the benefit of the study of millennia of history," Thompson writes, "with an emphasis on human nature and the nature of government." Unfortunately, "this system has been subverted by those who desire power," and "politicians get away with unconstitutional acts due to the ignorance of the majority of our citizens."

He offers a solution to this problem, which is for our population to reacquire an understanding of the ideas and ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

How did the Founders — and the people of the United States — develop the ideas we call American Exceptionalism? Thompson mentions the Colonial experience of the frontier, and how the people in the English Colonies enjoyed the blessings of private property on a scale not known in Europe. This led to an independent-minded population. Even with this unusual blessing, the population of the country still needed education on the benefits of limited government. This required not only *education* on the benefits of limited government, but also *organization.* Organization came though the Sons of Liberty and Committees of Correspondence.

Thompson also cites the importance of the religious revival in Colonial

America known as the Great Awakening, which created a conviction in the hearts and minds of the population to do what is right. He credits the Sons of Liberty and the Committees of Correspondence with giving people the *knowledge* to go with their enhanced morality. While the War for Independence is often called the "Revolutionary War," it was not like most revolutions around the world. Those fighting did not want to overthrow local government or change society, "as modern revolutionaries do."

To illustrate this more vividly, Thompson quotes John Adams, who in an 1818 letter wrote, "But what do we mean by the American Revolution? Do we mean the American war? The Revolution was effected before the war commenced. *The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people*; a change in their religious sentiments of the duties and obligations.… This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people, was the real American revolution." (Emphasis added.)

The importance of education and organization is the major theme of the book. Only by becoming educated in political principles and organizing to take effective action can we protect the cause of liberty.

Thompson writes that this is why the Declaration of Independence is not studied as much as it used to be — it clashes with the Marxist support for one-world government. The Declaration says unequivocally that our rights do not come from government, but rather are granted to us by our Creator. This explains, Thompson notes, why there is such a push to eliminate any reference to God from public life. Totalitarians do not want the population to have any loyalty other than to them.

The Declaration of Independence lit a torch of liberty in the world, because America is the only country in the world that declares that rights come from God. "It is the foundation of everything American. And it is the essence of American Exceptionalism." This means, Thompson argues, that "no one can deprive us of our rights legitimately, *not even government*." (Emphasis in original.)

It is no accident, then, that the movement to abolish slavery began in the Colonies, and the Declaration of Independence was the first step in its elimination.

Closely related to the elimination of slavery is the understanding that private property rights are, as Thompson puts it, "as sacred as the laws of God." He believes this is one reason that the Ten Commandments are so hated. The Eighth Commandment states, "Thou shalt not steal," while the Ninth Commandment condemns the bearing of false witness. Thompson notes that robbing someone of their freedom or property is often the motivation for lying.

The Tenth Commandment, which states "Thou shalt not covet … anything that is thy neighbor's," is a "complete rejection of socialism," Thompson contends. One might add that coveting is the foundation of the campaigns of many left-wing politicians today.

Other aspects of the American system of government make it "exceptional" as well. Thompson argues, "The United States is the only country which has a system of completely independent law enforcement under the control of local citizens through their elected representatives on their city council." The "defund the police" movement targets *local* law enforcement, not federal agents. Because local control of law enforcement is such an important aspect of maintaining our status as a free people, it is not surprising that those who want to create a socialistic world government hate locally controlled police.

One way that local control is undermined is via federal funding. Such funding will invariably lead to federal control of all law enforcement, after local governments become dependent upon that funding. While there will always be a minority of local police officers who do wrong, federalizing police will simply shift control away from local communities. When Adolf Hitler took over Germany, one of his first moves was to nationalize law enforcement. The Gestapo is not what we want in our country.

In subsequent chapters, Thompson addresses other aspects of American Exceptionalism and how efforts to subvert our republican form of government go back to the early days of the country. He then explains how the 17th Amendment, which provided for the direct, popular election of U.S. senators, rather than election by their respective state legislatures, undermined federalism. No longer do state lawmakers exercise influence over the senators from their state, which reduces the power state governments have to rein in an out-of-control federal government.

Arthur R. Thompson

Although President Joe Biden made the 2022 midterms about preserving "democracy," and even some conservative commentators mistakenly refer to America as "our democracy," as Thompson notes, the word *democracy* is not mentioned in the U.S. Constitution or any other founding documents, such as the Declaration of Independence.

The full restoration of American Exceptionalism, Thompson concludes, depends upon upgrading

moral standards and getting organized — and taking action.

Readers who value limited government and individual liberty should find a place on their shelf for this book. ■

Chamberlain: An Extraordinary Man

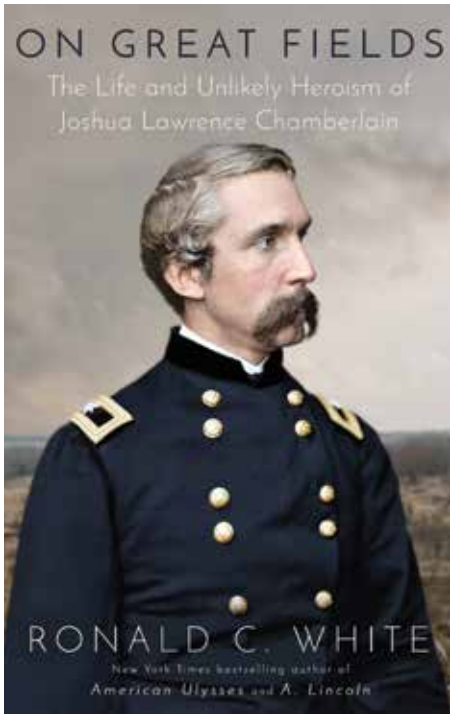
by William P. Hoar

***On Great Fields: The Life and Unlikely Heroism of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain*,** by Ronald C. White, New York: Random House, 2023, 512 pages, hardcover.

Near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, armies of the Union and the Confederacy had "stumbled into the biggest battle ever to be fought in the western hemisphere," and on the second day of that crucial clash, on July 2, 1863, there was a key moment. The brigade commander had told the colonel leading the Twentieth Maine Regiment that his force had been placed on the left of the Union line, and "You are to hold this ground at all costs!"

The colonel was the fighting college professor from Maine, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain (1828-1914), and the historic locale is, of course, Little Round Top. Maine lumbermen, farmers, shopkeepers, and seamen had been battling against a force largely composed of farmers from Alabama — with each side about 650 miles from their homes as the crow flies (as one Southern historian observed years ago) — fighting as if the battle, or the war itself, depended on their bravery. It may well have.

The men from Maine were running out of ammo, and were looking to their leader for direction. It was a time for heroism — when some extraordinary men realize that this is when you keep your fears to yourself, but share your courage with others. It was also a time, it turned out, not for defense, but for offense. Here's the author of *On Great Fields: The Life and Unlikely Heroism of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain*, Ronald C. White, at this strategic moment:



> With the outcome of the deadly struggle in doubt, Chamberlain called out: "Bayonet!" After a breathless silence, as if a spark has lit a fire, first a few men on the left wing sprang forward; then a few more on the right wing leaped into the fray. Now shouting, the Maine soldiers plunged down the tree-lined, boulder-strewn slope, surprising the stunned Confederate troops, who either surrendered or ran in defeat.

Summaries have a propensity for transforming order from what was frenzied action. Chamberlain himself recalled later, in print amid his flowery language, the chaos encountered: "The two lines met and broke and mingled in the shock. The cuts of musketry gave way to cuts and thrusts, grapplings and wrestlings. The edges of conflict swayed to and fro, with wild whirlpools and eddies. At that time I saw around me more of the enemy than my own men; gaps opening, swallowing, closing again with sharp convulsive energy."

Recapitulating, White writes, "Outnumbered and out of ammunition, Chamberlain had led the Twentieth Maine to victory. The victory at Little Round Top … would change his life forever."

Decades later, in 1893, Chamberlain received the Medal of Honor for that audacious action at Gettysburg. The medal cites his "daring heroism and great tenacity in holding his position on Little Round Top against repeated assaults, and carrying the advance position on Great Round Top." (Unfortunately, the writer and the publisher erroneously refer to this as the "Congressional Medal of Honor," which is a common mistake.)

Formative Years Set the Stage

The middle of this admirable and generally measured volume — the six chapters designated Part Three, covering Chamberlain's military career — could serve as a sound manuscript by itself. It's certainly the focal point of this study, and likely why most readers will be attracted to it. Making it better is the book's thoroughness and noteworthy, often overlooked, tidbits. White, who earned his Ph.D. at Princeton and is senior fellow of the Trinity Forum in Washington, D.C., succeeds in telling the story of a worthy life.

This includes additional emphases about his subject's formative years, including his Christian faith and scholarship (heavy with the classical past — to include lists of the Bowdoin College curricula over four years), his three years as a student at Bangor Theological Seminary, and Chamberlain's extended life after the Civil War. Also included are Chamberlain's complicated relations with his wife; his presidency of Bowdoin, which was not a bed of roses; and his four terms (one year each) as Maine's governor. These are examined comprehensively, as are other aspects of Chamberlain's career and personal side. Adding such context was White's intention, he acknowledges, as it was with his earlier bestselling biographies about Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant.

Chamberlain has been the subject of biographies before — and this is a laudable addition to that collection — but his name had been fading (as author White does point out) until he was featured in a historical novel (1974), a television documentary (1990), and a popular movie (1993). Respectively, those were Michael Shaara's

The Killer Angels, which won a Pulitzer Prize; Ken Burns' *The Civil War*; and the movie *Gettysburg*, with Jeff Daniels playing Chamberlain. A statue of Chamberlain in military attire, located at the edge of Bowdoin College (this reviewer is a 1967 Bowdoin graduate), is a relatively recent addition, funded privately and dedicated in 2003; it faces the First Congregational Church in Brunswick, where Chamberlain was a member and where college commencements were long held.

Reading about Chamberlain as a Bowdoin student, professor, and president is — for this reviewer — akin to being caught in a disordered time machine: Some of the professors and college officials who are his contemporaries are, for me, "buildings" named for those personages. Even in the '60s, most of us were aware of some of Chamberlain's history, though not all the fine points. Certainly, we knew of the nearby Stowe House in Brunswick, where Harriet Beecher Stowe began writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; less so of her husband, Calvin Stowe, a professor at the college back in the day. I'm not aware of any who realized that student Chamberlain had been in her "circle" that discussed her work. (Some of my contemporaries, unnamed here, admittedly were more interested that the Stowe House of our era had a pub on the basement floor, where friendly "Benji" didn't check IDs.)

As the book makes clear, Chamberlain was certainly a religious young man. His father wanted him to go to West Point and have a military career; his mother pushed him toward the ministry. Going to Bowdoin first allowed him to put those other choices aside for a while. Actually getting into the school involved, among other efforts, 18 months of dedicated study in his attic (sometimes with a valuable tutor), then a 100-mile sleigh ride from rural Brewer to Brunswick in order to face an entrance examination by a committee of professors who interrogated him on, among other matters, Latin and Greek grammar.

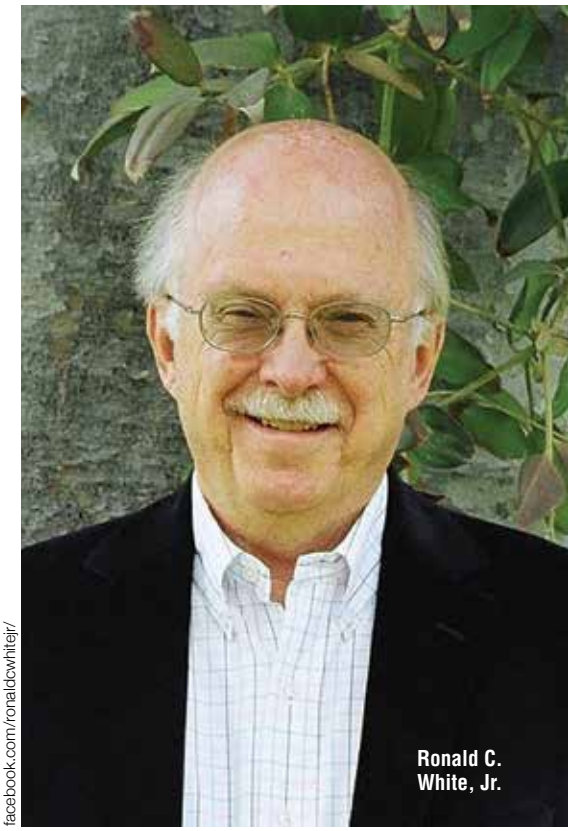
Our protagonist gets humanized, becoming more of a recognizable typical youth to readers of *On Great Fields*, when White describes the student hijinks that resulted in Chamberlain being temporarily suspended from college. Even then, it is telling that the principled youth didn't rat on his fellow miscreants.

Here are a few housekeeping matters. Helping to make the copy more accessible, there are nine detailed, decidedly helpful maps, as well as photographs throughout.

The author notes, while discussing his young subject, that he "liked to refer to the three parts of his name — Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain — as his scriptural, medieval, and modern names, but he introduced himself as Lawrence, the name his parents would call him though his life."

We also learn of his stammering struggles — even as he eventually became fluent in nine languages, becoming a professor of rhetoric and, in his latter life, an accomplished public speaker.

If you are wondering where the volume's title comes from, that too is from Chamberlain, in this case from a dedication speech he made in October of 1889 for the Maine monuments at Little Round Top, in which the former general said, "In great deeds, something abides. On great fields, something stays. Forms change and pass; bodies disappear; but spirits linger, to consecrate ground for the vision-place of souls."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Ronald C. White, Jr.

Yet, for decades in the last century, as the author points out, the official guides at Gettysburg and Little Round Top did not even mention Chamberlain's name. That has changed. Little Round Top has become the most visited place at Gettysburg. West Point — which would please Lawrence's father — now sends cadets there to role play at Little Round Top, depicting Chamberlain and other leaders in exercises.

Wounded at Petersburg, Salute After Appomattox

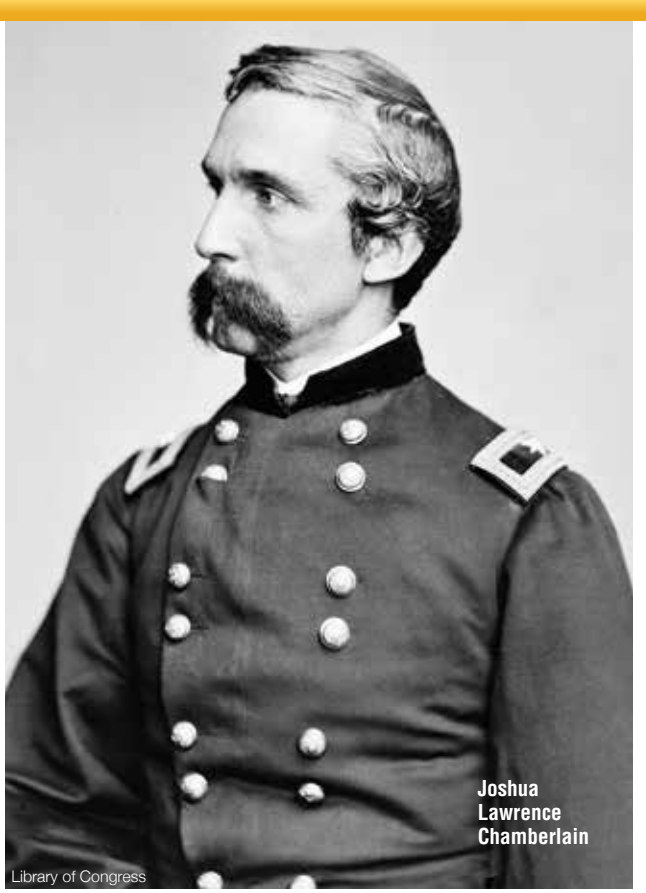
There is considerably more about the war, as one might expect, with everything from minié balls to smallpox among the impending threats. In 1864, at Petersburg, Virginia, Chamberlain's horrendous wounds — including injuries to his hip, bladder, and urethra, decades before antibiotics — seemingly were mortal. Death was at hand. He was so told, solemnly, by at least two examining surgeons.

If you want to get a lump in your throat, check out the letter that Chamberlain, believing that he was dying, wrote to his wife. (The handwritten original, from Chamberlain's order book, is available for viewing at the Hawthorne-Longfellow Library at Bowdoin.) It is personal and moving, as he tells her, among other private remarks, that his mind and heart "are at peace. Jesus Christ is my all-sufficient savior."

Despite surgeries over the years, he never really recovered from those wounds and other subsequent war injuries; infections kept recurring, and he was in pain for the rest of his life. At the time, when informed of the approaching death, Chamberlain's superior officer informed the commander in chief of the Union forces of the situation. As Grant later wrote — while he himself was dying from throat cancer — in his *Personal Memoirs*, Chamberlain "was gallantly leading his brigade at the time, as he had been in the habit of doing in all the engagements in which he had previously been en-

gaged." Grant continued, noting that Chamberlain "had several times been recommended for brigadier-generalcy for gallant and meritorious conduct. On this occasion I promoted him on the spot."

Following Lee's surrender at Appomattox, Chamberlain's actions again were notable. General Chamberlain was designated to command the infantry surrender ceremonies; General John B. Gordon of Georgia was in charge of the Confederate surrender. Chamberlain, we read, was "determined to mark the surrender in the spirit of the magnanimity Grant had expressed to Lee three days earlier." The word that the author repeatedly uses about this turn of events is "reconciliation."


Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain
Library of Congress

Here's the setting: As mere yards separated the blue and gray lines, Chamberlain sought to replace the wide rift that had divided them for years. As White explains, Chamberlain wanted to "offer some recognition, not to the Confederacy or the cause for which they fought, but rather to the bravery and courage of the soldiers in ragged uniforms marching toward them." When the Georgian general

> arrived ... Chamberlain, to the sound of a bugle, ordered the command to bring their muskets from 'order arms' to 'shoulder arms' — the marching salute, with the musket held in the right hand, perpendicular to the shoulder — and saluted his former enemies.
>
> Gordon, surprised by Chamberlain's salute, wheeled his black horse and touched his sword to his toe. He then signaled his men, rank upon rank, to respond to what he would later call 'a token of respect.'"

Over the years that followed, Gordon and Chamberlain, erstwhile enemies, became close friends. In his *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, Gordon — who became governor of Georgia and a U.S. senator twice — described Chamberlain as one "of the knightliest soldiers of the Federal army," also recalling the "token of respect from Americans to Americans, a final and fitting tribute from Northern to Southern chivalry." The Mainer is said to have "wept bitterly" when he heard of Gordon's death in 1904.

Our era, sadly, is not an age of chivalry. Even as we read our copy of *On Great Fields*, a century-old Confederate memorial was being removed from Arlington National Cemetery in northern Virginia (see page 27). So much for reconciliation. About the same time, in Georgia, as reported in the military publication *Task & Purpose*, Fort Gordon — which was opened just before the Pearl Harbor attack and is now home to the Army's Cyber Command and Signal Corps — was redesignated. It became the last of nine U.S. Army posts stripped of their identities because their names were those of Confederate Army officers.

Twelve Dramatic Days in Augusta

One of the more intriguing chapters of this book covers a period when Chamberlain had finished his gubernatorial terms in Maine and concluded his years as president of Bowdoin. In "Twelve Days in 1880," White recalls when Chamberlain (who was a Republican) served as a (largely ceremonial) head of the state militia in Maine. The episode was complicated, so here's a precis: State politics (potentially affecting national politics) became a "three-cornered fight," in Chamberlain's words. In short, the then-Democratic governor allied with a third party called the Greenbacks (which backed paper money as the way to prosperity), forming the "Fusion" party.

In the fall of 1879, the Republican nominee for governor seemed to have won easily, with a plurality over the other two parties, though falling short of a majority by 840 votes. According to the state constitution, that meant the election would go to the House. Even though the Republicans had majorities in both the House and Senate, their opponents had another plan — which became known as the "Great Count-Down." The incumbent Democratic governor and his "seven-man Fusionist executive council immediately began to disqualify ballots on various technicalities."

Violence and a potential coup loomed. Chamberlain was called in, and he became, in essence, the military governor. In his position, his life seemed to be in real danger, and he switched his sleeping places nightly, seeking to thwart a rumored kidnapping. There is also a dramatic episode depicting Chamberlain physically standing down an angry crowd in the rotunda of the state Capitol, literally daring them to kill him. The incident reads as fiction — but it isn't.

Twelve days later, the state Supreme Court settled the matter in the Republicans' favor. In a letter to his wife, Chamberlain called this incident "another Round Top."

Wouldn't this make an intriguing PBS documentary? Some might charge Ronald White with hyperbole. Read his narrative and the evidence he presents, and judge for yourself.

If nothing else, by the time the reader closes this volume, he should be convinced that Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain left the world a better place. ■

TAKING ACTION

Preventing Another J6

Why You Need to Take Action

by William S. Hahn,
CEO of The John Birch Society

As more is revealed about the events of January 6, 2021, one word comes to mind: railroaded. The conspiracy at the highest levels of government to protect its Deep State and drive toward tyranny under a New World Order appears to have contrived quite the plan to stop patriots from returning government to a semblance of its original constitutional limitations.

But is anyone really surprised?

After all the lying, the censorship, and the great lengths governments around the world have gone to over these last four years to control humanity and pound out dissent, no one should be surprised.

Writing in *American Opinion*, a predecessor to this magazine, in November of 1973, Medford Evans noted, "Conspiracy is a real mode of political struggle. Few people will long continue to accept the implication that so natural a weapon as conspiracy is used only against the Communists and never by or for them."

The John Birch Society has tracked the master conspiracy to end freedom and enslave mankind for 65-plus years. The goal is subversion from within, so that the United States will fall like overripe fruit into the hands of the communists. Yet, in the age of 24-hour security cameras, video cameras in the hands of nearly every teen and adult, and the ability to livestream and upload video and photo content from almost anywhere, the truth is not easily hidden. J6 footage continues to be released and discussed by the pundits, while the only true conclusion is that a weaponized federal government will stop at nothing to protect its ill-gotten gains from anyone who threatens to take them away.

As Lord Acton so accurately assessed, "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

The next obvious question is, what can we do? Some have suggested that gun owners take up where the Founding Fathers left off. However, doing so would be playing right into the hands of these despots. They want to have another reason to go after patriots and crack down on the God-given rights of all Americans.

No, what's needed is an exercise of Americanist tools already at hand. The doctrine of lesser magistrates proclaims that elected officials (who have sworn an oath to the Constitution; including and especially county sheriffs) are to protect their constituents from the overreaches of higher government. Note this does not mean laws that they merely dislike, but laws, rules, edicts, regulations, etc., that are unconstitutional (i.e., not pursuant to the Constitution, as stated in Article VI). The Founders pointed out that these officials have the sworn duty to interpose and nullify the unconstitutional actions. This occurs much more often than you may realize.

Another protective measure is the local police. In January 1964, JBS founder Robert Welch wrote in the JBS *Bulletin*, "The local police everywhere are preponderantly our friends, because many of their own number are familiar with Communist tactics and viciousness from firsthand experience. The local police forces of our country will constitute — and in some cases already constitute — our final physical barrier against the Communists' taking 'the law' and 'law enforcement' into their own hands. For this reason the Communist press of America has been screaming for years — and louder every year — to have local police forces discredited, shunted aside, or disbanded, and replaced by Federal Marshals or by similar agents and personnel of a national federalized police force."

Welch launched the Support Your Local Police and Keep Them Independent campaign in 1963, and it remains a priority today.

Our patriotic members care about the longevity of this experiment of freedom launched long ago by the Founding Fathers and others. If you're concerned, too, The John Birch Society can help. We provide the training, the education, and the plan for less government, more responsibility, and, with God's help, a better world. We can help keep J6 from happening again, while also restoring freedom, independence, and liberty.

Join today to work with others in your community. Start at JBS.org. ■

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